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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**First Session, 38th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Première session, 38^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Monday 18 October 2004****Lundi 18 octobre 2004**Speaker
Honourable Alvin CurlingClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersPrésident
L'honorable Alvin CurlingGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On October 14, the Métis Nation of Ontario gathered on the French River for a ceremonial gathering and special hunt. This gathering marking only one of the contributions that the Métis Nation of Ontario makes to the diverse cultural heritage to our province.

Unfortunately, the MNO has become a victim of this government's record of promise-breaking. On July 7, the Métis Nation of Ontario thought they had entered into an agreement about hunting and fishing rights with the Minister of Natural Resources. The agreement was consistent with the Supreme Court Powley ruling respecting Métis hunting and fishing rights.

Without notification, the Minister of Natural Resources broke the agreement he had made with the Métis Nation of Ontario. Instead of notifying the Métis Nation of Ontario of his decision to withdraw from the agreement, the Minister of Natural Resources sent out a media release on the eve of the hunt.

What we see demonstrated by the Minister of Natural Resources is something that is becoming all too familiar in this province. What the Métis Nation of Ontario has experienced is a complete lack of respect for their traditions and, worse still, a complete disregard for the commitment made to them by the Minister of Natural Resources.

First they broke their promise to taxpayers and introduced a regressive and punitive health tax. Now they are breaking their commitment to the Métis Nation of Ontario. Who knows where that will end?

KNIGHTS' TABLE

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I rise today to call attention to a very important institution that is being forced out of their location in my riding of Brampton West-Mississauga. The Knights' Table has been serving over 250 meals a day to the less fortunate for over 14 years in downtown Brampton. They serve a wide spectrum of clientele from all different ages and demographics.

Nilda Patey, the executive director of the Knights' Table, stresses correctly that it isn't just single homeless men who use the Knights' Table. Increasingly in our affluent community, we find that it is working people with families and single mothers with children who frequent the Knights' Table. A few weeks ago, I visited the Knights' Table and met with the youngest client of the kitchen: a one-month-old baby.

Lower-income families are struggling to make ends meet in Peel region. Over the past 10 years, homelessness has increasingly become a problem. Places such as the Knights' Table are vital in providing a warm, comforting meal and environment to the most vulnerable members of our community.

I have been actively working with the Knights' Table and local business owners in finding a location near the Brampton downtown core. We have also been working in providing more stable operating funding from various government grant programs so that the growing need in the community will be met by the Table and other organizations like it.

If anyone wishes to be the shining knight for the Table, please contact the Table at 905-454-8725. The Table will remain a warm, friendly and caring place where all are welcome and none need to leave hungry.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I was shocked to learn on the weekend that—

Applause.

Mrs Munro: Thank you very much.

I was shocked to learn on the weekend, while reading the paper, that the Chair of Management Board has cancelled a deal to move the Ontario archives to a new location. This puts at risk millions of documents that represent our cultural and historical heritage. The minister denies that killing the move is a cost-cutting measure, attributing the closure to a legal opinion that he refuses to release.

Why do the archives need a new space? A report several years ago said that the current space is unsafe, unhealthy and that the preservation of documents is at risk. The collections are starting to develop mould and the second floor is sagging. Visitors and staff face security risks in a space that has little capacity for electronic surveillance, poor line of sight for guards and dangerous hidden alcoves where individuals can loiter. Historical documents and photos are at risk of theft or damage, and

thefts have already been reported. Documents as old as 200 years are at risk in this space that stores everything from birth, death and marriage records to native treaties and watercolours by Governor Simcoe's wife, Elizabeth.

Our government had a plan to secure and improve the archives. This Liberal government has dithered for an entire year, and then cancelled our plan. It hides an obvious budget cut behind a legal opinion it is keeping secret from the public.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we begin School Bus Safety Week in the province, I appreciate the opportunity given to me today to explain to all members of the Legislature why the safety of our children has a special resonance for all my constituents in Thunder Bay-Superior North.

This past February, four-year-old Allyceea Ennis lost her life while riding on a school bus en route to St Margaret school. While the circumstances surrounding Allyceea's tragic passing remain unclear and the regional coroner has not yet determined whether he will hold an inquest related to this tragedy, Allyceea's passing forced all of us to look more closely into how we can make travel on the province's school bus routes safer.

Melanie Perrier, the mother of this beautiful four-year-old child, has fought through her deep and unending grief to launch a multi-faceted campaign to ensure that no other parent experiences what she has gone through. While Ms Perrier supports the government's recent initiatives in this area, she believes much more can be done. In that regard, I will be officially launching her petition campaign later this afternoon in the Legislature.

One aspect of Ms Perrier's campaign relates to child safety restraints for children under 50 pounds in weight. Transport Canada, which is responsible for regulating safety standards on school buses, has completed a study which verifies the clear benefits of these special restraints. What they have not done is to enact the necessary regulations to make these restraints mandatory. While I know that our Minister of Transportation has written the federal minister to ascertain when we can expect this, I would like to ask Minister Takhar today to press his federal counterpart to move more quickly to get this regulation in place.

To properly honour Allyceea's memory and to move forward on any improvement that could reduce injuries and even avoid a future tragedy such as Allyceea's passing, we can surely do no less than see this vital safety device put in place.

1340

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Today, the McGuinty government started bragging about getting results for health care in its first progress report since coming to office a year ago. Dalton McGuinty is trying to

get our minds off his numerous broken promises and record-breaking tax hikes, but it simply won't work.

I have constituents waiting up to 10 months for MRIs and CT scans. Some, like Roger Lockhart of Collingwood, just don't want to wait. Because of this outrageous delay, Mr Lockhart travelled to the United States to get an MRI. He couldn't get timely care here in Ontario. Mary-Lou Brown of Duntroon was told that her Aunt Muriel will have to wait up to two years for a coronary transplant because the Toronto Western Hospital doesn't have the money to fund operating room time past two or three hours a week.

The Liberals also talk about improving access to cancer care, but they seem to have forgotten that they cut \$2.5 million from the Ontario breast screening program in this year's budget. In my area of the province, cancer incidence is increasing 25% quicker than the Ontario average and cancer mortality is increasing 42% above the provincial average, and we don't even have a cancer centre.

Recently, we learned that Sick Kids Hospital is facing a \$45-million budget shortfall that's going to force them to either lay off nurses or reduce and eliminate necessary services.

I don't know how this government can have the gall to talk about hiring 1,000 new nurses when they're cutting funding to Ontario hospitals. They talk big about boosting hospital budgets by \$385 million last year, but this year they're cutting \$200 million from those same hospital operating budgets. No one should believe this government. No one should trust this government. They're certainly not getting better results for the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Today, Dalton McGuinty gave himself a B. That's exactly why we don't let school kids grade themselves. Is Mr McGuinty the kind of person who, when he was a kid, would forge his parent's signature on the report card so he didn't have to show it to them? It looks like Dalton has taken a red pen to make a B out of a big fat F.

Down in Hamilton-Niagara, where I come from, people flunked the Liberals, failed the Liberals for their incompetence, excuses and broken promises. In the last year, ordinary Ontarians have learned that Dalton can't read. He can't read his election promises sufficiently well to keep them. They have learned that Dalton can't write. He's not doing the right thing every time he breaks yet another one of his promises. Who knows arithmetic well enough to count up all of the Liberal broken promises?

Clearly, on promise after promise, Dalton and the Liberals simply don't make the grade. Just today, Dalton broke another promise. Before the election, he promised to ban partisan political advertising. Then he released this expensive, glossy report in Liberal colours that reads word for word like the Liberal election platform, minus the broken promises. And who is paying for it? Tax-

payers. If a page comes up here, I'll send you this glossy, very partisan bit of fluff produced on the taxpayers' tab. I'll table with the Clerk evidence of the Liberals' disregard.

Liberals and promises: It's like they make them to break them. I say it's time to teach the Liberals and their promise-breaking Premier a lesson. Let's send these guys to promise-keeping boot camp and in three years, let's expel them.

PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to announce Ontario Public Library Week, which begins today and runs until October 24. The theme of this year's Public Library Week is Community Heartbeat @ Your Library.

During this week, we celebrate the contributions made by public libraries across the province. Public libraries are important hubs that help to build strong and healthy communities. I'm proud to say that Ontario has one of the best public library systems in the world. Ontario Public Library Week is a great way to celebrate the cultural, educational and economic contributions our libraries make. They are the trusted source of community information across the province, providing free and accessible services to 96% of all Ontarians. Last year, 69 million people visited our public libraries, circulating more than 100 million items.

This week, the Minister of Culture will be announcing funding initiatives, a new program for children and the details of support for small libraries from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I encourage all Ontarians to visit their local libraries this week to take part in the celebrations.

PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Today is a special day. Few have had as much impact on the Canadian consciousness as the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was a passionate leader. Today marks his birthday and we celebrate a continuing legacy and reflect on his acts of proud service, both large and small, and his ability to bring people together.

Canada's vibrant society is enriched by the cultural diversity of its people, who have the inalienable right to participate fully and equally in the life of the country, regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

The late Prime Minister inspired people to stand up for our democratic rights and be proud to be Canadian. Pierre Elliott Trudeau's motto was "reason over passion." But it was his passion for Canada that defined him. It was his dream of a just society that captured the imagination of our country and made the entire world take notice. He inspired so many people to public service. That forever changed many generations of Canadians.

In recognition of our late Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, I, along with community members from Concord and Thornhill, worked to raise money to build a man-sized bronze statue of the late Prime Minister in Thornhill. The statue was unveiled today, which marks the day of his birth, and will allow people an opportunity to come and visit the statue for years to come and remember what a great Canadian and Prime Minister he truly was.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to tell you that the people in my riding of Niagara Falls know our government is proceeding in the right direction and that change is working.

I'd like to read to the House from a copy of a letter I received addressed to the Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, from the seniors living at the Bella Senior Care Residence, a long-term-care service provider in the village of Chippawa in my riding.

It reads as follows: "On behalf of the 160 residents and 148 staff at Bella Senior Care Residence, we wanted to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the operating fund increase effective October 1 and the commitment for additional increases.

"We also want to let you know that the decisions to increase the comfort allowance and not to increase the resident copayment this year are also appreciated by our residents and their families."

In closing, these seniors wanted to let the minister know that they are very encouraged by his view of the role and potential of the long-term-care sector in the ministry's transformation agenda, and are looking forward to continuing to work with the minister to ensure that Bella Senior Care is able to realize these opportunities.

This is proof positive that change is in the air for our seniors under the excellent guidance of the Minister of Health. This House and the people of Ontario owe the minister a round of applause.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): With us today in the Speaker's gallery are the 2004-05 Ontario Legislative interns. We have Timothy Culbert, Nicola Hepburn, Audrey Lemieux, Adam McDonald, Kaila Mintz, Ben Rossiter, Rebecca Sciarra and Rebecca Scott. Will all members join me in welcoming the interns here today.

VISITORS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the east members' gallery I have my granddaughter Lucia and my daughter Kristen.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order, but it's a good point.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report on the five-year review of the Securities Act from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Hoy presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Hoy: I want to thank all committee members and, most certainly, all persons who made submissions before the committee.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF OTTAWA ACT (LICENCE COMMITTEE), 2004

Mr McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr8, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr McNeely?

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I have no comment, Mr Speaker.

PHYSICAL FITNESS DAY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE L'APTITUDE PHYSIQUE

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 127, An Act proclaiming Physical Fitness Day /
Projet de loi 127, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'aptitude physique.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr O'Toole?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The bill proclaims the first Friday in September each year as Physical Fitness Day. Numerous medical studies consistently show that a moderate amount of physical activity is one of the keys to a long and healthy productive life. Prevention is the best medicine.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing

order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, October 18, 2004; Tuesday, October 19, 2004; Wednesday, October 20, 2004; and Thursday, October 21, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 171. All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Oraziotti, David	Yakubski, John
Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 71; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1400

PERSONS DAY

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in celebration of the 75th anniversary of Persons Day in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Today it would be absurd to ask a woman if she thought of herself as a person, and I particularly would

like to point out the number of young women we have in the House today and ask them if there was ever a time in history that we would have had a conversation about whether women were in fact persons.

But in the early 1920s this was a hotly contested issue. Women were officially considered non-persons and were ineligible to be appointed to the Senate. In fact, British common law stated that they were "persons in the matter of pains and penalties, but not in the matter of rights and privileges." It wasn't until October 18, 1925—75 years ago—that women were formally considered persons under the law. On that day, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of England overruled the Supreme Court of Canada's definition of a person with the words, "and to those who ask why the word 'persons' should include females, the answer is, why should it not?"

Today is the 75th anniversary of that ruling, which is known as the "persons" case. It was a huge victory for all Canadian women. The "persons" case is the inspiration for this year's theme for Women's History Month: "Yes! Women are 'Persons!'" / Oui, les femmes sont des «personnes!»

For the past 12 years, Canada has marked October as Women's History Month, to celebrate and recognize the many achievements and contributions of women in the development of our great country.

The "persons" case ruling in 1929 helped pave the way toward equality and participation of women in all aspects of Canadian society. Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney and Henrietta Muir Edwards, better known as the Famous Five, fought for 13 years to make it possible for women to serve in the Senate and become fully participating citizens. A few months after the ruling, on February 15, 1930, the first woman in Canada's history, the Honourable Cairine Reay Mackay Wilson, of Ontario, was appointed to the Senate. She was also the first woman appointed Chair of a Senate standing committee.

However, this was not the first victory for women in their quest for equal rights. Women won the right to vote in federal elections in 1918, after years of intense and imaginative campaigns to make the public aware of the voting rights issue. They won the right to vote in Ontario elections in 1917. Women's participation in public life has grown significantly since then, with representation on municipal councils, provincial Legislative Assemblies and as members of Canadian Parliaments. Women have achieved success and influenced social change in leadership positions as heads of political parties, chairs of royal commissions, as Prime Minister and as Governors General of Canada.

There are outstanding women throughout Ontario who have made significant contributions to their communities, such as Agnes Campbell Macphail, the first woman member of the Canadian Parliament and one of the first two women elected to the Ontario Legislature; the Honourable Sheila Copps, the first female Deputy Prime Minister; and in our own midst, Lyn McLeod, head of the Ontario Liberal Party; people like Frances Lankin, who

ran for the New Democratic Party; and Elizabeth Witmer, who ran for the Progressive Conservative Party. These women are role models and we applaud them, not just here in Ontario but across Canada.

My government understands that ensuring equality for women is essential to building stronger, more vibrant, inclusive communities across the province. Today, 33 women serve in the Canadian Senate and 65 women serve in the House of Commons. Four women, including newly appointed Rosalie Silberman Abella and Louise Charron, preside on the Supreme Court of Canada, the largest number of women in any comparable court in the world. In this room, there are 24 women serving the people of Ontario as MPPs.

Ontario can be very proud of all its women. This month provides us the opportunity to honour their remarkable contributions.

However, much remains to be done to enable women to fully participate in our society. We need to continue to address women's safety in their homes, workplaces and communities, and ensure equal opportunities for education and training, particularly in high-growth areas where women are underrepresented.

It's my hope that today's young women will be able to look back at our generation the way I look back at the Famous Five, and that we can do so and they can do so with pride. Thank you.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today I am very pleased to speak on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize Persons Day. As we've heard, it was 75 years ago that the British Privy Council decided that women were persons under Canadian law. We certainly owe that landmark ruling to five outstanding, determined and very persistent women who took their fight all the way to the Privy Council in England, the highest court in Canada at the time.

These Famous Five—Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Nellie McClung—changed the lives of women of their generation and of all future generations. These women opened the door of potential political opportunity to women who would take the challenge.

Persons Day falls in October, during Women's History Month. It is a time for all of us to celebrate the contributions of women, past and present, who have shaped Canada in so many ways. In business, in the arts, in politics and in sports, women have increased their presence and their influence and demonstrated that they can excel in non-traditional fields.

Since this declaration, women in this province and Canada have made great strides. Canadian women have served as justices in the Supreme Court, heads of corporations and even as Prime Minister, Kim Campbell. We also have had our first leader, Lyn McLeod.

More women than ever before are pursuing post-secondary education, thus increasingly becoming economically independent. More women today are owners and operators of very successful small businesses. In all areas of life, women are working extremely hard toward

independence and self-sufficiency. Certainly today we salute and recognize all of these outstanding women.

However, although we have made very great strides forward, I think it is also important that there are still challenges ahead and still barriers to overcome. In fact, one of the biggest barriers that we need yet to overcome, according to Doris Anderson and others, is getting more women into higher levels of elected office in Canada. That is one of the next barriers that we need to overcome.

Certainly, if we are to meet this challenge and some of the other challenges that lay ahead for women, it is extremely important that all people in this province, indeed all of our colleagues on all sides of this House, work together. We need to ensure that women in this province and women in this country continue to make progress in achieving full equality in all areas of our lives. That is the legacy I want to bequeath to my son and daughter.

1410

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm honoured to be able to stand here today as a full person because of the work of these five women. I'm honoured to pay tribute to the 75th anniversary of the "persons" case and the Famous Five, who won this landmark ruling for all Canadian women. They challenged and defeated the status quo, which saw women as secondary citizens and strived to keep them from entering the arena of political decision-making. They wouldn't even let them vote.

I recently saw a bumper sticker that said something like, "Docile women seldom make history." Well, I may not make history, but nobody in this place can accuse me of being docile, I think. The Famous Five—Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Nellie McClung—definitely exemplify this adage, as well as many other women: the CCF's very own Agnes Macphail; Shirley Carr from the labour movement. I'm sure we could all go on and on about women who have led the way.

Their challenge to the interpretation of the term "persons" opened the door for women to take their rightful place in Parliament and in all aspects of public life. Isn't it absolutely incredible to believe that a mere 75 years ago, women were deemed less than full persons? We were merely chattels, the property of men. This is in my mother's lifetime. I want to underscore here that they did it by working individually and collectively—again, a testimony to the strength women have when we work together. Occasions like today remind us of this important lesson that we women, in recent years, at times seem to overlook.

I and my peers would not be where we are today had it not been for these five women coming together. Thanks to their legacy, we can now point to a stunning record of women's contributions to this province and, indeed, to this country.

Commemorating this watershed moment in Canadian political history is also particularly important in current times, when the declining representation of women in

Legislatures like ours is a telling reminder that we can never become complacent.

Part of the democratic deficit that underlines voter cynicism and declining voter turnout is the lack of diverse representation in Legislatures. Canada, once a leader in electing women to public office, now ranks 36th in the world among democracies in terms of women's representation in the national Legislature. Provincially, this slide is also all too visible. In Ontario, 28 women—still not enough—sat in the assembly when we were in government. The figure declined to 19 when the Tories took over, 18 in their second term, and currently we've moved up again, but not to the full 28. There are 23 women members. So after gaining some ground, the number of women in elected office today has not just declined but is in danger of rescinding more.

So while the five who came before us won one battle, a very important battle, there are many fronts left for us to fight and glass ceilings to shatter. The New Democratic Party of Ontario, indeed of Canada, is committed to ensuring parity of representation in the Legislature. That is one of the reasons we're calling for the introduction of a form of proportional representation, as recommended by organizations like Equal Voice, an action group that is tackling, in a very public fashion, the underrepresentation of women in Legislatures across the nation and in Ottawa.

Research undertaken by this group and by Fair Vote Canada, another partner in democratic renewal, shows that democracies with proportional representation have an average of twice as many women in public office. At the rate we're going now, I believe they have calculated it will take over 100 years to even achieve parity. That is not good enough. I've recommended that Attorney General Bryant pay attention to this point as we all await the unveiling of the Liberal's plan for restoring public faith and participation in politics.

Again, I am pleased to represent the Ontario New Democratic Party today in paying tribute to these five women who changed forever the lives of women in Canada and, indeed, in Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, I asked Premier McGuinty about your government's backdoor efforts to redefine medicare in Ontario by forcing hospitals to decide what services to cut as you strong-arm them to balance their budgets by creating two classes of patients: those receiving protected services and those who fall outside your priorities; for example, emergency room services. As usual, the Premier refused to provide a helpful response.

We've also contacted a number of hospitals to gauge the impacts that will result from your ultimatum, but the culture of fear you've engendered in the sector has them literally afraid to speak out. Minister, in last year's election you promised that health care services would be provided to all who need them when they need them. Are you now breaking that promise?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): There is obviously lots of evidence that abounds that hospitals are very engaged in the public discussion with respect to the challenges of operating within available resources. I would seek to remind the honourable member of two points which I think are very helpful in this discussion. The first is that our government is spending \$700 million more this year on hospitals than the amount of money allocated by your government in the Magna budget for this fiscal year. Since coming to office just about a year ago, we've invested nearly \$1 billion in operating at Ontario hospitals and acknowledged a further \$721 million in debts that are essentially the unpaid operating bills from when your party had the privilege of providing services in the province of Ontario. We recognize, of course, that there are difficult challenges, but I think the sustainability of our health care system does very much dictate that we operate within our means and that we move beyond the day where deficits could be run up and forced upon government in the final days of the fiscal year.

Mr Runciman: Although hospital administrators are afraid to publicly criticize the Liberal government, we did learn this weekend about some of the deficit projections facing a number of hospitals and some of the impacts.

We know the Sault Area Hospital is cutting 75 jobs; the Campbellford Memorial, east of Peterborough, will close 19 beds and lay off 21 people; the Huron-Perth Healthcare Alliance will close 47 beds; and at Sick Kids in Toronto, where the vice-president of child advocacy has mysteriously disappeared after speaking out publicly, there will be reduced patient care and longer waiting lists. Instead of enhancing health care services, as you promised, you're making it impossible for patients to get timely, adequate care.

Minister, explain to the people of Ontario why they are paying a new health tax yet getting less access to crucial hospital services. Why is that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member would be well advised to be reminded of the actions of his party on the subject of hospitals while in government. Was it in their second year that they actually cut hospital funding by 3.5%? Was it in their third year in government that they cut hospital funding by 4.4%? It had the effect of reducing the amount available to our hospitals by \$557 million.

1420

In contrast to the argument the honourable member brings forward, what have we done as a government? Early on, upon our arrival, we invested \$385 million in base funding for hospitals; in this year's budget, 469.5

million new dollars for Ontario hospitals, and a comprehensive and unprecedented investment in community-based care to assist our hospitals in diverting traffic so they can focus on the things they are best able to do.

We acknowledge that our hospitals have challenges. None of these changes that the honourable member has referenced have occurred to date. Hospitals are working through a process with our government, and the first piece of that is the expectation that hospitals will produce balanced budgets—not on an immediate basis, but by the end of 2005-06, because that's the relief Ontario hospitals sought and obtained from our government. We're working with them. There are difficult issues to be resolved for sure, but our determination to create a sustainable health care system is at the basis of this challenge.

Mr Runciman: Minister, you and your Premier have failed to address the impact of interim agreements you're strong-arming and intimidating hospitals into signing. You don't want to talk about the cuts these agreements will require to important services like chemotherapy, diabetes and arthritis clinics or emergency room services. We've already heard of a firefighter having to lie on a park bench outside an emergency room—an alarming and disturbing scenario, but an indicator of even worse to come from your ham-fisted government.

Minister, will you end your war on hospitals, stop your bully-boy tactics and release details of these interim agreements so that people will finally understand the effects of your attempts to transform the health care system in Ontario? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think the people of the province of Ontario fully recognize that the legacy of that party after eight and a half years in government was these difficulties that we experience in health care in Ontario. We've invested \$2.161 billion already this year in the most comprehensive expansion of community-based care, designed to assist our hospitals by diverting traffic. We've invested nearly a billion dollars in new operating funds as a government since taking office. And we've acknowledged \$721 million in operating debts, sir, that your government directed Ontario hospitals to bury in their books so the province could claim the books to be balanced.

So I do fully acknowledge the challenge associated with this difficult file—it is the largest line in the government's books—but our determination to work with hospitals to get them in balance and to keep them in balance on a sustaining basis is a fundamental issue and one which we're dedicating quite a lot of time to. I continue to look forward to working with the honourable member to resolve these issues to the benefit of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, last week we on this side of the House showed you the dire crisis facing the Ottawa Hospital. Today we learned that it is not only the Ottawa Hospital, but that you and your government's mismanagement and incompetence have literally started

a fiscal fire across virtually every hospital in Ontario. Last week we learned the details of the 35% increase that you gave to the OMA for our physicians. Two days later we learned another thing: Sick Kids faces a \$45-million cut. Minister, isn't it time that you stop this crisis you've created? Isn't it time that you admit this is all your fault? Won't you tell us right here and now what you plan on doing to fix this problem you've created?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity that the member's question provides to read a quote from a very interesting person. This is former Minister of Finance Janet Ecker, who said on Friday night, with respect to our agreement with the Ontario Medical Association:

"But I think this agreement has great potential. I think it is trying to take new money and it's trying to incent the kind of behaviour everybody says we need in the health care system if we're going to finally get a sustainable system. And so, if this agreement can go through and if it is a workable agreement, it might well make positive change."

The point is that the situation we inherited from that party—their legacy is clear. It was one that dissatisfied Ontarians. We're working very hard to develop better quality health services in the province of Ontario, we're making unprecedented investments to do so, and I believe we're on the right track.

Mr Baird: Sick Kids Hospital is in your constituency. You neither seem to be an advocate—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Nepean-Carleton, you've been using that prop. I ignored it the first time, but could you put your question without props, please.

Mr Baird: You're not prepared to stand up for the hospital in your own riding and neither are you prepared to stand up and be an advocate for any public hospital in Ontario. It's not just the crisis that you created in Ottawa or Toronto.

Let's look at the headlines from around the province: "Cuts Could Leave the Stratford General Hospital with 18 Fewer Beds"; "Campbellford Hospital to Cut Jobs to Balance Budget"; Nearby Peterborough Regional Health Centre Announced Plans to Cut \$12 Million in Spending"; and the "Cornwall Community Hospital Will Need to Cut \$7.1 Million Worth of Services." These are headlines from right across the province. Virtually every hospital is in a fiscal crisis.

For the first time in the history of the province of Ontario we don't seem to have a minister, a caucus or an advocate for public hospitals in Ontario. Will you stand in your place and now admit that this crisis is wrong—it's hurting patient care—and will you back down and fund our hospitals properly? Will do you that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Just a few facts that might be helpful to the honourable member: We have not cut one dime. Every hospital in Ontario is receiving more money this year than last. We have, as a government, invested nearly \$1 billion, not yet our one year anniversary in government. We're investing \$700 million more in our hos-

pitals this year than that party, while in government, proposed.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Baird: Going back to the question made by the leader of the opposition, not only do we not have an advocate for public hospitals in Ontario, we seem to have a bully government and a bully minister leading the charge against our hospitals. I want to ask you very directly, are you aware that the Sick Kids spokesperson Cyndy DeGiusti was forced to resign this afternoon, after your ministry put pressure on the hospital board over her comments in Saturday's Star? Will you admit that, and will you stop this bullying of the hospital community?

Hon Mr Smitherman: On the issue of an advocate for Ontario's hospitals, I'll put the record of our government up against the record of your government that I've enumerated this afternoon. Nearly a year in office, and we've invested nearly a \$1 billion of new operating funding in our hospitals. In two years, that party while in government reduced hospital funding by \$565 million. We're funding them to the tune of \$700 million more than their own Magna budget proposed for Ontario's hospital. I think this makes the point: We're working very hard in Ontario to create a health care system for once—

Mr Baird: You're fired.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —that recognizes the reality—

Mr Baird: Donald Trump—

Hon Mr Smitherman: —that community—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Nepean-Carleton, please stop shouting across. I'm not having an opportunity to hear the minister. I think you were completed, Minister.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Completed, Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week we learned that you were giving some physicians a 35% pay hike. Over the weekend we started to see the consequences of that. The Hospital for Sick Children said clearly that your health care decisions will mean a \$45-million reduction to health services for some of our sickest and most vulnerable children. Your Premier seems to think this is progress; I call it making a crisis.

Will you commit today that crucial children's hospital services won't be placed in jeopardy because of your deal with the doctors and your failure to properly fund our hospitals?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I note that the honourable member seeks to reference our historic agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. I had the opportunity on Friday to hear from a former Health Minister of Ontario, Dave Cooke, who said, "I think this, on the surface, looked like a very innovative agreement." The Toronto Star in an editorial said, "Deals with Doctors Good for the Province of Ontario." Communities all across the province, many of them in that member's own riding, have seen their fate in the hands of those two parties

while in government and it has been a fate of family doctors, disappearing from local communities.

I stand firmly in favour of a process that will once again renew family practice and restore vitality to it, and see doctors return to communities in Ontario. That will be important for providing services to children as well.

1430

Mr Hampton: The question was, will the minister guarantee that crucial health and hospital services for children won't be reduced? It's interesting. He did everything possible to avoid answering the question. That is the issue, Minister.

You hand physicians a 35% pay increase and then hospitals like Sick Children are facing a \$45-million reduction. They are very clear about what that means. It means a reduction in services for children. It means longer waiting times for children who need services. It means children's acute care beds being reduced, outpatient clinics being reduced, surgical beds being reduced.

Minister, I'm going to ask you the question again: Will you guarantee that crucial hospital services for sick children, children's acute care and rehabilitation beds won't be cut as a result of your failure to properly fund our hospitals?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'll remind the honourable member what I said a moment ago in answer to the other party's questions, and that is that every hospital in Ontario is receiving more money this year than they did last year. I think this is important.

With respect to the specific issue he raises, the member should know that the process we're involved in is not one that is to be resolved on the basis of a newspaper story but rather on Ontario hospitals working through a process which has been established with them, which is that first they must submit proposals with respect to balanced budgets. We'll work through these issues with them, including, as may be necessary, assisting them with turnaround teams that would involve professionals from other hospitals who have had success in creating balanced conditions.

We acknowledge that there's lots of work to be done in working with Ontario hospitals to get them in balance and to create a sustainable system, and we will do that. I remind the member that these issues he chooses to use for research, issues in the newspaper, are not the final word on the subject. We're working very closely with all Ontario hospitals to resolve these matters.

Mr Hampton: Once again, the question was, will you guarantee that these important hospital services for sick children won't be cut or reduced? Twice you failed to answer the question. You claim to be a know-it-all on health care; then answer the question.

Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre is also facing serious cutbacks. Right now, they are looking at cutting outpatient services, food services and housekeeping services. You and your Premier call that progress. Once again, I call it your broken promises and letting our children down. These are human costs, the costs of our chil-

dren who are suffering. So I'm going to ask you again: Will you guarantee that these important hospital services for sick and vulnerable children will not be reduced as a result of your failure to properly fund our hospitals?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I want to tell the honourable member that of course we recognize the extraordinary value of hospitals like Sick Kids and Bloorview MacMillan. While he seeks to suggest that I have no emotional commitment or attachment, I would simply tell the honourable member that as one who spent four months in Sick Kids Hospital, I have a very strong attachment to that hospital. That's where I went to celebrate my 40th birthday, with a contribution to their foundation. They do extraordinarily good work there.

Obviously, budgets must be established in our province on the basis of what is available and of the sustainability of our health care system. I repeat the message, and I remind the honourable member of two things: The first is that every hospital in the province of Ontario received more money this year than last, and that we have a process established with Ontario hospitals to get them in balance over a period of 18 months. That does provide us the necessary time to work through these very specific challenges that are being brought to the attention of the Legislature today.

The Speaker: New question?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of Health. Today, the Premier gave himself a B when he was grading your government, but when it comes to protecting health care for women, you don't make the grade at all, because you're putting unique health care services for women on the chopping block. The Ontario Hospital Association and Women's College Hospital tell us that your proposed budget formula for hospitals means deep cuts for women's health programs. You call that progress; hospital officials call it cuts to gynecology, obstetrics, breast care, birth control, fertility and abortion.

Will you guarantee today that you'll make sure none of these critical health care services for women will be cut?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity to address a question about another of the valued health care services that is located in the riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale. I have long been a supporter of the excellent work done at Women's College Hospital. The assurance I can give the honourable member is that we've invested more money in hospitals—almost \$1 billion since we came to office. We look forward to the opportunity of working through these challenges with Ontario's hospitals over the course of the next 18 months or so, and I can assure the honourable member that there will be no sign-off on these changes that have been predicted so far in newspaper stories. We're working to ensure that the provision of these essential health care services is there for the people of Ontario.

Ms Churley: I want to make it clear to the minister that I have met with front-line workers from the hospital. This is not just from a newspaper story; they told me what's going on there.

You say that you're making progress on health care. Let me give you more specifics about what is happening at Women's College Hospital, Ontario's leading women's health centre. The 24-hour urgent response centre is no longer open at night; the pelvic pain clinic is gone; there are just a few surgical beds left; the environmental health centre is disappearing; whole corridors are already empty; offices are vacant; equipment is moth-balled. And the worst is yet to come: You're forcing Women's College Hospital to cut its budget by 25%. Hospital supports say you're turning the hospital into a ghost hospital. I'm asking you again specifically, will you guarantee that you'll make sure none of these critical health services for women will be cut?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It seems a little bit interesting to get a lecture from a member of a government that closed 8,000 beds while she was part of the government.

On the issue of Women's College Hospital, I repeat what I said a moment ago in answer to the member's question earlier: It's an important facility. We recognize its very special role for women's health. I'm a very strong supporter of Women's College having a strong role in this regard. Obviously, like other hospitals in Ontario, they are submitting some information related to the challenges they must confront in reducing their budgets. We, as a government, are working with them to encourage them to take advantage of all those reports which have indicated hundreds of millions of dollars in savings in non-clinical areas that have not yet been taken advantage of.

I remind the member that she seeks to turn this into a crisis point of this afternoon but that we have an opportunity over the course of 18 months to bring hospitals in Ontario into balance and sustainability.

Ms Churley: Minister, it's not me trying to turn this into a crisis; you've turned it into a crisis. The front-line workers are coming to see me, telling me that they're already in crisis, and you're making it worse. Dr Bev Richardson, former chief of medical staff affairs at Women's College, says this about your progress: "This organization will not survive." It will be the last of a thousand cuts after what the previous government did to it.

You have a duty, Minister, to ensure that women get access to crucial and unique health services that we need. Your actions so far show that you think women's health services are dispensable. But it's not too late to do the right thing, and I have a recommendation for you: Will you commit today to take those services off of the cuts list and put them on the protected services list, where they belong? They are not on the protected services list, Minister. Will you agree to put all those services on that list so they won't hit the chopping block?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It's interesting that the honourable member thinks that spending more money makes things worse. The fact of the matter is that Women's College, with Sunnybrook, is part of a very significant and important hospital in Ontario. They're obligated, in the same way that other Ontario hospitals are, to file in-

formation with the ministry with respect to the initiatives they would undertake to get their budgets in balance. We have the opportunity to work with all Ontario hospitals to make sure that the things they're offering in terms of change are focused toward non-clinical areas. As I've said a few times in the House today, we have this opportunity over the course of the next 18 months and I look forward to working through these challenges with all Ontario hospitals.

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At the end point, what is clear is this: We're investing more money this year in Ontario hospitals. That party, while in government, reduced hospital beds by 8,000. That party, while in government for two years, reduced hospital funding by \$565 million. Our record is clear: less than one year in office, one billion new operating dollars for Ontario hospitals and acknowledgement of another \$721 million in the form of working capital deficits. This represents a very significant commitment on our part to making sure that our hospitals are performing their important role.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. About one year ago, you went to the OHA convention and you promised a new approach to solving problems. You can imagine their disappointment when, without any consultation, you introduced Bill 8, which shifted authority from the hospitals to the Ministry of Health, and you made them agree to specifics or run the risk of penalties or sanctions. That was the beginning of the intimidation, the threats and the fear that we see today.

Then you had your budget, which underfunded hospitals to the tune of about \$600 million. We know that these cuts are going to hurt the London hospitals. We see in the paper there are going to be service cuts, there are going to be staff cuts. Cliff Nordal, the president, says there are going to be longer waiting lines. Smaller rural hospitals might have to close their emergency departments. There are going to be service cuts.

I ask you, Minister, can you commit that no emergency rooms will close and that no nurses will lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Smitherman: You know it's going to be an interesting day at the Ontario Legislature when that member stands in her place and raises issues about nurses. This is the member who, as part of a government, fired thousands and thousands of them and then paid \$400 million to try to mask that.

The facts are very clear: a new government, one year in office, \$1 billion in new investment in our hospitals, \$721 million in working capital deficits acknowledged, the single largest community-based investment in those services designed to divert traffic from our hospitals so they can be left to focus on only the things they are best built and suited to do.

We're working through these matters with Ontario's hospitals. The Ontario Hospital Association asked us for

an extension to get these books in balance in Ontario hospitals. We've granted that. That gives us a window of opportunity to work through these on a case-by-case basis, and that is exactly what we're doing.

Mrs Witmer: Despite his rhetoric, I would like this Minister of Health, that person, if he chooses to refer to people in that way, to know that our government added 12,000 new nursing positions. You have promised to hire 1,000 more, and we now learn that hospitals across this province are threatening to fire nurses. There will be more than 1,000.

I would also say to you, despite your rhetoric, hospitals are not happy. They're not working with you in a co-operative manner; they do it only under the threat of intimidation, fear and anything else you or your staff are throwing at them.

I'd like you to acknowledge, at the least, that you can't expect hospitals to sign these accountability agreements in the absence of knowing their allocations for 2005 and 2006 or the impact of upcoming labour negotiations.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member makes an interesting case about her party's record while in government related to nurses. I think what most people will remember is that your government fired them by the thousands and your former Premier compared them to Hula Hoops, saying that nurses in our province were as out of date as the Hula Hoop.

I'm very proud of the initiatives we've launched with respect to nurses, and I'm very proud to say that in the work we're doing right now with Ontario hospitals the issue of the stability of the labour force, particularly around nurses, is one of those priority areas that we seek to emphasize.

I do acknowledge that we have a lot of work to do. The fact of the matter is, we've given ourselves an appropriate time frame to work through these things with Ontario hospitals.

I would just say a word to the honourable member. I had the opportunity earlier today to be in contact with a hospital's CEO. That hospital's CEO expressed no hostility toward me. In fact, that hospital's CEO is very pleased with the relationship we have. Many hospitals in the province are working through their difficult issues. We're doing that together.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. You'll know that there is a crisis facing alternate-level-of-care patients in the community. Last week, I asked you to consider temporary funding of long-term-care beds or temporary beds at the Sudbury Regional Hospital to try and avoid sending long-term-care patients to Manitoulin Island, Espanola or even Chapleau.

It's clear that funding temporary long-term-care beds at a local facility is an option. On Wednesday night, city council heard that as a result of a redevelopment project at our local home for the aged, some 30 beds could be

created on a temporary basis to resolve this crisis. That's why, on Wednesday night, city councillors passed a resolution urging you to fund 30 temporary beds at Pioneer Manor as soon as possible.

My question is this: Will you fund these beds and do it as soon as possible?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do want to comment to the honourable member. In fact, both members from the Sudbury area have been very forceful advocates on behalf of their constituents, as is appropriate. I'm not in a position today to tell the member that the resolution that's been proposed is one that we can move forward with, but I expect to be in a position within the next few days to be able to take advantage of some of the opportunities that do exist, recognizing, again, that it is a very, very significant challenge for people to be asked to move beyond their communities, particularly given the travel distances in northern Ontario and that winter is on the short horizon there. So I would hope, before the week is out, to be able to offer tangible evidence of progress on this very, very crucial issue.

Ms Martel: I think that Pioneer Manor offers an excellent short-term opportunity for these temporary beds, but I also think it offers real opportunity for long-term-care beds so that this crisis of a shortage of beds in our community will not continue.

As a result of the capital redevelopment, it's clear that there's a new opportunity to convert B and C beds to A beds. That could be done with minimal capital adjustments, much less than what would be required to actually build 30 new A beds right from the start.

So, Minister, as you consider funding temporary beds at Pioneer Manor in the short term to avert this crisis that's upon us, will you also have your ministry review what might be possible in the longer term at Pioneer Manor to convert existing space into new A beds?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The short answer is yes, but I wouldn't limit it to that option. I would say to the member, as I believe I acknowledged in my answer last week, that the allocation of beds in northern Ontario does seem to have provided significant challenge, not only in the Sudbury community. It's been a very, very significant issue in Thunder Bay and Timmins, as I think the member would be very well aware, and in other communities. We do think that there is a short-term point and also a longer-term resolution which is necessary. At the heart of that would seem to be overall bed capacity in northern Ontario. So we are taking a look at that longer-term issue, with a view toward trying to address it. But I hope to be able to demonstrate progress on the short-term issues before week's end.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Small businesses form a very vital part of Ontario's overall economy. In my riding of Hamilton West, many small businesses, such as the Locke Street Bakery,

Skinner Opticians, Pasword Communications or even Hill's TV, contribute greatly to our region's overall economic prosperity. These businesses hire from our local communities, purchase goods and services from our local communities, and thus contribute immensely to the overall economic success and growth of our Ontario communities.

Will the Minister of Economic Development and Trade confirm to the Legislature the importance of small business in Hamilton West and Ontario's overall economy?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me thank the member for the question. I'm proud to stand up today to tell the Legislature that October is officially Small Business Month in the province of Ontario. The member is right: Small business plays an extremely vital role in Ontario's economy. In fact, small businesses generate 60% of all new jobs in Ontario; 94% of all small businesses employ fewer than 50 employees; nearly 75% of these businesses employ fewer than five people. So it is extremely important to our economy.

1450

Let me just cite a report that was brought forward by CIBC, entitled Canadian Small Business: Back in High Gear. The report says that Ontario will lead the country in small business growth: 90,000 new firms in 2004-05 will be created, and an expansion of 6% for the year 2004-05. So this is good news for Ontario's economy.

Ms Marsales: Thank you very much, Minister. I'm glad to see you understand the vital role that small business plays in our economy, and certainly all the women who are participating in these small businesses. Could you please tell me what we are doing to help these small businesses achieve greater economic success?

Hon Mr Cordiano: We are diligently working on the creation of a small business agency. With the help of my parliamentary assistant, Tony Wong, who has consulted with the small business community, we're going to make access to government programs easier and decrease the amount of paperwork that small businesses have to do through the use of a one-window, Web access portal, working with my colleague Jim Watson.

Also, we lowered our small business income limit to \$400,000 through the help of the Minister of Finance—thank you very much.

We are also increasing the number of apprenticeships, working with my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Minister Chambers.

We're also bringing forward a northern Ontario strategy through the good work of my friend Rick Bartolucci.

This McGuinty government is working together to ensure that we have a very positive business climate for all businesses in Ontario, particularly small businesses.

WOODSTOCK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you heard in my statement last

week, the lack of approval of Woodstock General Hospital is wasting taxpayers' money because a full year of construction has been lost. The sidewalks are installed, the pre-grading is complete and the fundraising is well underway. The people of Oxford don't understand how the hospital could be so close to completion and then stall like it has. They have been questioning your motive for the delay. Minister, will you assure the people of my riding that this delay is not politically motivated by signing off on the approval immediately?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the work of the people in this community, and I know that they've gone through a lot. But the thing they should understand is that any delay is motivated by the very clear reality that your government made a lot of promises that it didn't leave enough money to back up. We're working through those challenges, therefore, to be able to make sure that we move forward with the construction of hospital capital in a fashion which is consistent with the fiscal realities we're facing.

I want to repeat what I said right at the get-go: There's lots of recognition of the incredibly hard work and community support that exists around this proposal, and I just want to reassure the community of that.

Mr Hardeman: Not only does this delay waste time and taxpayers' money, it sends a signal to our doctors in the area that they are not valuable enough to be provided with a modern facility in which to work. While you were out last weekend negotiating billion-dollar deals with Ontario's doctors, you were ignoring the facilities these doctors need to practise. I appreciate that we should value our doctors' services, but do you not also want to provide them with the proper medical facilities?

Show the doctors in Oxford that you understand their profession and how much they need this new hospital. Minister, will you assure the doctors in my riding that you value their services by signing off on this hospital?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Any doctor in the province of Ontario reading the current negotiated agreement we've made would have no doubt about the extent to which we think they are essential for the provision of good-quality health care.

I would simply remind the honourable member that in the life of his government, the government that he was part of, communities in this province went from 60 to 132 designated underserved. The gentleman beside him was a lobbyist for that designation in his community.

I just want to make the point that not all doctors who provide essential services to Ontarians practise in hospitals.

I stand by the comments, of course, that I made in my earlier question. I look forward to being able to work with the local community and move forward on their health priorities. But I would just remind the honourable member that in the run-up to elections, many things were said and many great big oversized cheques were presented, but on presentation to the bank, the legacy of your government was that too many of those cheques were NSF.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, many parents joined my NDP colleagues to protest your plans to cut transportation funding for 30 school boards across Ontario. Tonight, parents will be at the Durham District School Board to fight the cutbacks to busing.

Trustees say they have to cut services because your government is cutting funding. These cuts will mean almost 1,000 children have lost seats on their school buses. These cuts leave children walking beside busy highways or walking to school alone. These cuts make children less safe.

The question to you is, will you tell these parents today that you are scrapping your current plan and that you will develop a real student transportation plan that offers reinvestment instead of cutbacks?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): We really appreciate the member opposite giving us the chance to address the question here in the Legislature, because he wouldn't want those parents or anyone to misapprehend what's happening in education today. Things are getting better in every board. In fact, this year transportation funding increased by a minimum of 2% for every board, by an average of 5% across the board. We're the first government to actually open up a dialogue with the boards on how transportation should be funded in the future.

I'm sure the honourable member opposite will not perpetuate a misconception. In fact, this is a discussion of a draft document that may happen in terms of a formula for transportation funding that will ask boards one thing and one thing only: to be fair with the way they transport their kids, to not have an advantage over other boards and to maintain a high standard.

It just so happens that in Durham region the two boards aren't collaborating as much as they could. We're giving them an amount of money today that covers all of their needs, plus an increase. We're saying that for their future years, we want them to consider becoming more effective. We think that's a good thing to do because it allows us to take care of all the needs we have in the future to meet some of the needs across the province that have more challenges. In fact, over two thirds of the boards face significant increases.

We have a discussion, as past governments sometimes forgot, with the people affected, because they are the ones who are going to make sure that students and their parents have the comfort of knowing they get the transportation they need.

Mr Marchese: Minister, you've already ditched support for school bus funding. In fact, your claim that this is only a discussion paper—your so-called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation document, the one I'm holding in my hands, which is available on your Web site, goes into detail about where you plan to cut education funding. It also shows clearly that this new funding model is being phased in this year. Minister, if this is a draft plan, why

are you implementing it right now and why don't you admit that it's a bad plan and scrap it today?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I guess I should be a little more generous. I thought the member opposite would join with us right away. Maybe after the supplemental, he'll join with us to make sure we develop the best transportation funding formula.

I guess I shouldn't be shocked, but the document he has in his hands says at the top—and maybe we can get his help here—"draft" funding formula. I know the member opposite intended to include that.

What we're saying is a reasonable thing—something they're not used to after eight years in the wilderness and four or five years of confusion before that—which is that they should be part of the answer. They should be part of drafting a better transportation formula. We invested \$33 million more in transportation this year. We would ask for all of the boards to be part of moving forward with the best way to make sure that kids get safely transported.

I look forward, after this further explication, to having the member opposite join with us, making sure that everyone knows there have been no cuts at all. There is no implementation of anything this year. This formula can be improved on, but only if all the members of this House undertake to get good, accurate information out there, which I know the member opposite will now do.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It's certainly not a secret to anyone in this House that providing access to professions and trades for internationally trained professionals is vital to our workforce and our economy. Since we formed government, I know we've done substantial work on working with Ontario's regulatory bodies and by providing several bridge training programs to provide our internationally trained with Canadian work experience.

But about 70% of the residents of the neighbourhoods of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park in my riding are recent immigrants to Canada. Many of them received approval for their applications to immigrate to Canada specifically because of the points they got for their professional credentials, but when they got here, they discovered that their credentials aren't the ones Canada's regulatory bodies accept. More than that, they're frustrated by the fact that the process to appeal an accreditation decision by a regulatory body varies widely among the professions and trades, with no common standard.

Minister, could you talk about what steps our government is taking to address this issue?

1500

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We are closely committed to improving the access of internationally trained individuals to professions and trades in Ontario. With regard to the process for accreditation and licensure, many refer to that process as being confusing and arbitrary.

I do want to say that I've been working with the regulators over the past several months, and many of them are making really good progress. But it is a fact that the processes vary greatly from one regulatory body to another. Very recently I appointed former Ontario Justice George Thomson to review all these processes and the appeals opportunities that go along with these processes. I have asked him to recommend to me an appropriate process for independent appeals.

Ms Wynne: Minister, the review of the appeals process is a strong step, and it indicates that we're committed to continuing to work with our internationally trained individuals. However, I know that many newcomers to our province have been caught off guard by the requirements they must meet in their chosen profession and have also been unaware of the demands of their respective trade or profession in Ontario's labour market.

At a recent town hall meeting in Thorncliffe Park, this is the refrain that MP John Godfrey and I heard over and over again: On average, it takes two years from the time of first contact to immigrate to Canada. Given good information about the requirements they must meet to practise in their field of expertise, those two years could be spent getting ready to come and work in Ontario.

Minister, what steps will our government take to better inform our internationally trained individuals in Ontario's labour market climate of the requirements they need to practise and the programs our government offers in order to prepare them?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The fact that individuals come here feeling that their credentials have been accepted is a very reasonable expectation they would have, because they're in fact assessed on the basis of their number of years of post-secondary education and their number of years of work experience, and then they arrive here and find that's not valued to the extent they think it should be.

I'm working with my colleague Minister Bountrogianni on this, and she's working with the federal government on this as well. We think it's absolutely essential that prospective immigrants and all who are interested have a good sense of what the labour market forces are in this province. Recently, we actually launched a Web site. This is part of the government of Ontario Web site. You click on "economy" and it will take you to "career maps" and labour market information by profession. I know this is the kind of information that individuals will be interested in having even before they leave their home countries so they can work toward effective integration into our workforce.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In Thunder Bay and Sudbury, the hospitals are receiving 80% funding for their construction projects. Why has the McGuinty government refused to provide

equivalent funding for the new hospital project in North Bay?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Speaker, I know that the Minister of Health would like to respond to that.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Because the proposed project in North Bay also includes the transfer of a psychiatric facility, I can confirm for the honourable member that the government of Ontario's contribution is, I believe, 79.3% in total.

Mr Miller: I'm pleased to hear that the minister is increasing the funding, but the mayor of East Ferris does not feel that way. He suggested that the province is treating municipalities served by the North Bay regional hospital like second-class citizens. Councillors in North Bay and East Ferris say that they face the same tax assessment challenges and construction costs as Thunder Bay and Sudbury. East Ferris's share of the cost will be little more than a million dollars, a significant amount for a small municipality.

Taxpayers in East Ferris are already paying for health care through your new health tax. Why are you discriminating against the people of the North Bay Regional Hospital?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm very pleased to report to the honourable member the same thing I had the opportunity to say to the mayor on a face-to-face basis, and it was simply this: If I were to go with him to visit the Sudbury hospital, which is the regional centre, which provides for trauma and tertiary care and the like in northern Ontario, we would see residents from East Ferris. If I were to take the mayor of Sudbury to North Bay, the likelihood of seeing residents of Sudbury in the North Bay hospital is much reduced.

It really makes the point that in northern Ontario there are two regional hospitals that are asked to provide services to a much broader piece of territory than just the communities nearest to them. While all hospitals, of course, draw people in from farther afield, these two hospitals in northern Ontario are essential to the proper functioning of the health care system.

The fact of the matter is that under the funding formula, and the way your government was moving forward, both of these hospitals were being compromised by multi tens of millions of dollars of deficit related to the construction of their hospitals that only had one outcome, if not resolved in this fashion: that it would further imperil their ability to provide the supports that the people of East Ferris and everywhere else in northeastern Ontario are depending upon the Sudbury Regional Hospital to provide.

RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. On December 12 last year, you announced a moratorium on school closures. At the same time, you promised a new funding formula for rural schools by March this year. You

promised as well an additional \$177 million in funding for rural schools. Minister, March is long since past and we haven't seen the new \$177 million for rural schools. As a result, the Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay is set to close 19 schools, many of them rural.

Minister, you said to the people of Ontario, "Choose change." You promised a moratorium on school closures. You promised the \$177 million of new funding. Where is it?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Again, I'm still working on the accuracy of some of the information coming from the third party. The member opposite must have taken notice, because he cares about this issue, that we did deliver an extra \$33 million for transportation, part of our rural initiative. He would have noted as well, very closely I'm sure, because it affected very significantly some of the riding he represents, the \$31 million that we provided directly to rural schools not very long ago.

In fact he knows, because I happened to see him in the airport lounge, that I was up in Thunder Bay on Friday and met with the school board there. He may wish to talk about schools closing.

They're interested in talking about what is the best school system. They were interested in knowing about the number of things we're working on right now that will affect their decisions there—every single one of them an improvement. One part already announced is that \$2 billion is going to fixing up some of the schools that the past two governments let crumble, let get past their best-before dates, let them go down because maintenance and support weren't there.

We've delivered on this and more, Mr Speaker, and I look forward to telling you more about it in my supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The question was about the \$177 million in new funding that the McGuinty government promised, which hasn't appeared yet. As a result, the Lakehead District School Board is set to close 19 schools, many of them rural schools. But what was amazing: When the minister went to Thunder Bay, he must have grabbed a Conservative policy book, because the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal says, "Education Minister Gerard Kennedy Has Changed His Tone."

"Rather than urge the Lakehead District School Board to slow its course toward school closings, the minister now commends the board for its 'forward-thinking' approach."

This is what the Conservatives used to say. Where's the change that was promised? Where's the \$177 million in new funding? What's going to happen to these kids who are already being bused for an hour and 15 minutes to rural schools when those schools close and they have to be bused even farther? Where's the change you promised the people of Thunder Bay and people across this province?

1510

Hon Mr Kennedy: It's very interesting. The leader joins his critic in this supposition that isn't founded in

fact. We have put forward \$65 million. We talked about a \$177-million commitment. We've already engaged a very large part of it. There is more to come.

In fact, what he should pay close attention to—and if he or his critic or anyone in his caucus wish to talk to the board, they'll find the board is now looking at what improvements they can make. They made a plan based on the dark days, based on the kind of rules and assumptions that came from the government opposite. They know now very clearly, as does that entire community, that those days are behind us. We have started to put together the kind of support there should be for rural and northern school boards.

I would say that board and all the boards I met with—I met with northern Ontario education leaders—know that we have delivered increased funds for rural schools, that we have delivered increased funds for transportation; and new guidelines and other support for them are forthcoming.

Again, I invite the member opposite to work with us on the improvements that are happening. Get your head out of the sand and see that it's already underway.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, on September 9, your ministry strengthened support for people with developmental disabilities by investing in community supports and launching a major new review of the developmental services system. Can you please explain to the House what exactly that announcement entailed and what it means for the developmental services sector in Ontario?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On September 9 we did, in fact, make a very significant announcement, probably the most significant announcement, that signals a huge shift in retooling of policy in developmental services, something that is long overdue. In that announcement, we also said in the next five years we would be closing the three institutions which still exist in Ontario. That would happen over the next five years. Combined with the closure of those three facilities is the investment in the next four years of \$110 million in this sector so we can properly lay the groundwork for the thousand people who still live in these institutions and will be moving into the community.

As you know, we have to continue funding in the developmental services sector to help all families be certain that those individuals will move into community when the community is ready to receive them. I recognize that there are some who have significant issues, families with great concerns, and we are taking great care to be certain those families will be comfortable with what happens with their individuals.

Mr Hoy: Minister, indeed in that same announcement, you set the date for the closure of three institutions that

remain here in the province, and that included southwest regional centre in my riding. My constituents have expressed a concern about this announcement. Can you please clarify for the families and staff what this move means for the developmentally disabled who live in these facilities?

Hon Ms Papatello: It is important that on the day we made that announcement we took great care to have an opportunity to speak with families in advance. Ministry staff and personnel spoke to virtually every family that has an individual in the institutions, and we took the time to talk to staff people in advance of making the announcements, because we recognize how difficult and challenging it can be for some people affiliated with this.

I want to say that every single government since 1987 has supported the movement to close these facilities. We believe it's the right thing to do. We have to be very mindful of how difficult and challenging it is for some and take care that we make this change gradually and that we do it well. These are individuals who are our most vulnerable citizens, and we owe our most vulnerable citizens to take the time to do it properly.

Let me also say that in the communities where these facilities are located, we are taking great pains to ensure we speak across ministries of this government, as well as other levels of government, so we can bring people in to talk about the redevelopment, the potential for economic development in these areas.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Chairman of Management Board. As stated by my colleague from York North today, we were shocked to hear your decision to cancel the move of the Archives of Ontario. This decision puts the historical records of our province and its people at great risk. The current location is simply no longer suitable. Will you do the right thing now, stop hiding behind the legal opinion which you will not release and restore the funding for this vital project, or will you just play politics with our history?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The first thing I would say is I want to assure the people of Ontario that we clearly will ensure that we protect these important documents. We've done a couple of things. One is that you're probably aware that 80% of the archives are moving into a new facility that is being built in the north of Toronto—80% of them will be handled there. The second thing we're doing is to look at a significant long-term plan for housing the archives. I would say that when we came into government a proposal was there and all the legal advice we got was that we were unable to accept it. And if you want to know what we do, we take these legal opinions seriously. We're not going to put at risk the taxpayers of Ontario. I just want to assure everyone we will come forward with a plan for ensuring that we have a long-term, viable option to make sure that our archives are properly protected. We will do that, we'll do it in a fiscally responsible way and we'll do

it in a way that ensures we don't run into significant legal risks.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's the end of oral questions. It's time now for petitions, but there's so many people standing, I'm not sure if I can recognize anyone. I'll recognize you all.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and many more like it from a lot of people right across Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and" psychotherapy "services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and" psychotherapy "services and restore funding for those important and necessary services."

I have also signed it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm having difficulty with so many people standing. I don't know if they are wanting a petition or they're leaving the Legislature. But I will easily recognize the member for Beaches-East York.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition here that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I am in agreement and would sign my name thereto.

1520

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I am beginning the petitions put forward by Melanie Perrier, the mother of Allyceea Ennis regarding school bus safety. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education requires district school boards to ensure that classes, 'on average for each board, do not exceed ... 24.5 in elementary overall (junior kindergarten through grade 8)';

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education states, 'For safety and discipline purposes, a school bus is regarded as an extension of the classroom';

"Whereas a full-size school bus has 24 seats and can carry up to 72 children, far more than a teacher is allowed to supervise unassisted;

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation states, 'Police can charge drivers with careless driving if they do not pay full attention to the driving task';

"Whereas school bus drivers, no matter how diligent, cannot adequately supervise up to 72 children and safely navigate a multi-tonne bus through busy traffic and changing road conditions;

"Therefore, all elementary school buses should have a trained adult supervisor on board in addition to the driver.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation regulates deployment of safety equipment unique to school buses;

"Whereas Transport Canada recommends that, 'depending on their physical characteristics, children up to the age of four or five be restrained on school buses using the same restraint system recommended for a passenger vehicle';

"Therefore, school buses require the proper installation and use of appropriate child safety restraint systems for all junior and senior kindergarten students.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is responsible for establishing rules and regulations pertaining to driver qualifications and licensing; and

"Whereas the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators recommends that commercial vehicle drivers take a first aid course that includes respiratory emergencies, artificial respiration and accident scene management;

"Therefore, all school bus drivers should annually pass mandatory instruction and testing in first aid, CRP and emergency situation management, as a requirement of Ministry of Transportation licensing.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, remember Allyceea and petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislature pass a law:

"(1) requiring all elementary school buses to have a trained adult supervisor on board, in addition to the driver;

"(2) requiring the proper installation and use of appropriate child safety restraint systems on school buses for all children under 50 pounds or 23 kilograms; and

"(3) requiring all school bus drivers to annually pass mandatory instruction and testing in first aid, CPR and emergency situation management, as a requirement of Ministry of Transportation licensing."

Thank you for your patience. It's a very important petition signed by—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Further petitions.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I need to say happy birthday, Mum.

Applause.

Mr Ouellette: Thank you.

This petition reads:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my name in support.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition that is written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas seniors and other qualified patients require the continued provision of physiotherapy services through schedule 5 clinics to promote recovery from medical conditions and continued mobility and good health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The patients of schedule 5 physiotherapy clinics request the continued support of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for provision of OHIP-covered physiotherapy treatment to qualified seniors and others in need of these vital health care procedures."

I'll sign my name in this corner.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have just come from a meeting concerned about the expansion of the Edwards landfill.

"Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act, as of June 17, 2004, amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit waste in the lake; and

"Whereas in the act, 'lake' results from human activities, and directly influences or is directly influenced by groundwater; and

"Whereas Edwards landfill is to be 15 acres excavated 29 feet and a wetland/slough forest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Halt the Edwards landfill site excavation."

These petitions are being published in the Haldimand press, and I affix my signature to them.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a unique petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr Marie Bountrogianni, has stated that it is the policy of the Ontario government to 'help children and youth with autism' (press release from ministry, March 26, 2004); and

"Whereas, despite this stated policy by the ministry, it has come to the attention of parents with children attending Gledhill public school that the number of teaching assistants designated to Gledhill public school will be reduced from four to two, in spite of an increase in the number of children with learning disabilities attending the school; and

"Whereas all of the children attending the school benefit from the presence of teaching assistants to assist children with learning disabilities, including autism and autism spectrum disorders, in that their presence allows the teachers to share their time among all students equitably as the TAs provide the additional supports needed to assist students with special needs;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned parents of children attending Gledhill public school, demand that Minister Bountrogianni along with the Minister of Education ensure that the Toronto board of education is instructed to at least maintain the present level of teaching assistants designated to Gledhill public school and all other schools in the system, and that they ensure that adequate funding is in place to make this attainable in order to ensure equal opportunity and the safety of children with learning disabilities."

I am in accordance, and would sign my name thereto.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that" millions of "patients who use chiropractic" services "will no longer be able to access the health care they need;...

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs;...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced" on May 18 and to reinstate the coverage for OHIP.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centres services in their own area; and

"Whereas, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001, and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and, in August" of 2003, "the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I affix my signature.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who have chosen to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I sign my name with full support to this petition.

1530

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas gasoline prices have continued to increase at alarming rates in recent months; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario's drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government consider an immediate gas price freeze for a temporary period until world" crude "prices moderate; and

"That the Dalton McGuinty provincial government petition" their "federal Liberal" cousins "to step up to the plate and lower gas prices by removing the GST on gasoline products and fix the federal Competition Act to ensure consumers are protected and that the market operates in a fair and transparent manner."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my petitioners, Shirley Kuipers and others.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have received more petitions to save the Leslie M. Frost Centre. I shall read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre is Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre, aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and how they can be sustained for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

EVENING SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised to make the needs of students a priority for his government and that students deserve to have a bright future with a good education; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised not to give up on students or Ontario's public school system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government work with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board to establish an evening bus route from St Joan of Arc High School in Barrie to the outlying communities. This would allow students to participate in extracurricular activities and help them to fulfill their potential, secure a bright future and receive the best educational experience possible as promised to them by the Premier."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N° 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 14, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et

modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Mr Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent to stand down my 13 minutes to follow the New Democratic Party, the next speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I understand that this is considered to be the leadoff speech and that I have a whole hour to address the assembled crowd here.

Interjection: We are so honoured.

Mr Prue: I'm glad you're so honoured.

This bill is Bill 106. It is the Budget Measures Act, 2004. It contains, within the body of this budget, really only three things. The first is the Ontario health premium, which I intend to speak solely and exclusively on, but it also contains provisions of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act that I understand my colleague Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay, spoke on earlier in this session, and as well the Trust Beneficiaries' Liability Act.

I intend to speak only about the Ontario health premium because it is perhaps the most controversial aspect not only of this bill, not only of this budget, but I would arguably state the most controversial measure that has been undertaken by this government in its first year in office. It is a most regressive measure. It is a measure which is not designed, in my respectful submission, to help the people of this province; particularly, it is not designed to help those who are of moderate or fixed income, those who are at the middle or lower-middle economic strata in Ontario and those who daily struggle to try to find the monies necessary for themselves and for their families.

It is a most singularly regressive measure, and it is a measure that was clouded in some forms of secrecy in the first few days. I remember the Minister of Finance standing up and, first of all, calling it a premium because he didn't want to call it a tax. Then, when he was pressed on the issue, he admitted it was a tax and not a premium when he found out that if it was a premium, there would be many collective agreements, including the collective agreements of the Ontario government's own employees, that may kick in and force the companies that were responsible for those collective agreements or who had to pay for those collective agreements to actually pay.

Having said that, there are three things wrong with this premium.

The first is that the costs are borne disproportionately by the poor and by those of middle income.

The second thing is that it is unlike the rollback of the OHIP premiums in 1989. It's not simply a reinstatement of those—that would be a bad measure in and of itself—but this is even worse, because in 1989, more than half of the people who had their OHIP premiums paid had them paid by the employer. In the 15 years that have passed since then, of course, no one has had those premiums paid, because there were no premiums by the employer.

Last but not least, the third reason is that, although anyone can argue and anyone should argue that the dollars were probably necessary for medical services in this province, medical services that had once been the pride of this province and of this country but that are now sorely in need of cash infusions—they would be hard-pressed to stand here and tell this House or the people who are watching on television that the money was not needed for hospitals, for doctors, for nurses, for chiropractors, for the thousand other things that our medical industry is able to give to the people of this province. However, having said that, the \$2.4 billion that is going to be raised by this regressive tax could have and should have been raised more equitably by those people who could better afford to pay it than our working poor.

If I may continue, how does this bill operate? Well, there is an appendix at the back of the bill that sets out how people are going to pay these OHIP premiums, and I would just like to go down how these premiums are going to be paid and how they are going to be borne most disproportionately by those who are of limited income.

The government, in this first fiscal year, 2004-05, is going to raise \$1.635 billion by the measures that were introduced. Next year, in the year 2005-06, it will raise some \$2.35 billion through this OHIP premium. When it's fully rolled out, this is what's going to happen: Individuals earning between \$20,000 and \$36,000 a year will be forced to cough up \$300. Individuals earning between \$36,000 and \$48,000 a year will have to pay \$450. Individuals earning between \$48,000 a year and \$72,000 a year will have to pay \$600. Individuals earning \$72,000 to \$200,000 a year will pay \$750. Individuals earning more than \$200,000 will pay \$900.

The premium is absolutely regressive, because you can see that people who earn \$200,000 pay only some three times as much as those who earn \$20,000—10 times more income coming in, but only three times more that you have to pay on this regressive tax. The premium is extremely regressive, with lower-income folks paying a higher proportion of their income than those who have high, high income.

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In fact, as a percentage of income, the premium figures also show how regressive this is. At \$25,000, the surtax is 1.2%. By the time you make \$70,000, that declines to 0.86%. If you're lucky enough, one of those rare individuals in this province who earns \$100,000, the surtax has gone down to three quarters of 1%. If you earn \$200,000—and here we're only looking at about 1% of the population—the surtax is down to 0.45%. At \$500,000, if you are one of the extremely rich CEOs of the major corporations or you have all kinds of money from however it is made, the surtax is down to 0.18%. Therefore, 1.2% for those poor people who earn \$25,000 a year, and 0.18%, about one sixth of that, for those who earn above \$500,000. This is the inverse of our tax system. Our tax system, which is designed to be fair, taxes those who can most afford to pay it. This regressive tax taxes those who can least afford to pay it, and then says it's a premium.

The premium substantially increases the provincial income tax payable for low- and moderate-income earners as follows: Those individuals earning \$30,000 a year end up paying 24% more provincial income tax; those earning \$50,000 a year will pay 16% more provincial income tax; those making \$100,000 a year pay only 7% more provincial income tax; and those people who make lots of money—the \$200,000-a-year people—pay only an additional 3%. So if you earn a modest income—\$30,000 a year—you pay 24% more on provincial income tax than you paid last year. If you earn \$200,000, it's a pittance; you're only going to pay 3% more, so I guess you can really afford that. But it shows you again how regressive this tax is.

No matter how the tax is calculated, it's regressive. If it's on the basis of dollars alone, it's regressive. If it's on the basis of a percentage of what you're paying, it's regressive. If it's on a percentage of the income tax you pay to the province of Ontario, it's regressive. There is nothing good to be said about this particular tax.

I'd also like to talk about people who are poor in this province. There are a number of key determinants of what causes poverty. It's caused by a whole range of things from housing to education to opportunity to the place where you live. There are those who would say that visible minorities tend to be poorer than non-visible minorities. There's a whole range of things done to assess that. But the one that is universal, the one that is used by this government, by the federal government, by the governments of the municipalities—indeed, universally across the province—is the low income cut-off figure arrived at by Statistics Canada. That figure says who is poor and who is not. If you earn above the level established, you are considered no longer to be poor; if you earn below that, you are said to live in poverty.

The figures, of course, are different for various parts of the country. They are different in rural places as opposed to urban ones, where rents tend to be higher. They are different in small cities as opposed to large cities. They are different in Toronto than they are in Halifax. But in Ontario, in the large cities like Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto, a low income cut-off figure, which determines when a person lives in poverty, for a family of three is \$28,560. That is, a single mother with two children who has a job and who earns \$28,560 is said to live in poverty in the city of Toronto, in Hamilton or in Ottawa. But that same individual, under the formula of this bill, will be forced to pay a premium. That same individual will be taxed approximately an additional 20% in provincial taxes this year. Although that individual lives in poverty, that individual will be forced to pay, under the provisions of this bill.

If we look as well at somebody who lives in a small urban region—we can look at the city of Kingston or we can look at Cornwall or St Catharines, cities that are smaller around the province—the low-income figure is \$22,635. So an individual living there, that same mother with a modest job, two children, who earns \$22,635, would as well be required to pay some amount of money

under the provisions of this bill. She lives in poverty, her children live in poverty, and she is further placed in poverty by the provisions of this bill, which force her to pay a premium when she does not have the necessary money.

I would also remind the members of the Legislature of one final number, which I think is kind of interesting. For a person, again, in a large urban area like Toronto, Hamilton or Ottawa, a single wage earner in a family of five—and let's say the mother is the single wage earner and the father's the stay-at-home dad, because these things are starting to happen, and there are three children. The family, in order not to be in poverty, must earn \$38,646. If that family has one earner who earns that much, they have to pay \$450 under your plan. Think for a moment about what you are doing. You are taking money from people who are living in poverty. You are taking it from the wage earner, you are taking it from his or her family, and you are taking it from the children.

This is one of the reasons that we are opposing your bill. We are not opposing the bill because the money is not needed. The money is needed. I will state categorically, and we have said this from the beginning: The money is needed for the hospitals; it is needed for the doctors, for the nurses; it is needed for health care; it is needed for public health; it is needed for 1,000 very good reasons. But it is how you are getting the money that is wrong. You are taking it from people who cannot afford to pay it and you are taking it, in the end, from people who live at or near the poverty level. You are taking it disproportionately from the working poor and from those who are not at the higher income levels enjoyed by many in our society.

We go on to health and where the money is going to be spent. As I've just said, there are many good places you're spending the money. I would even agree on some of the inoculations, although not necessarily that you took the money away from chiropractic services, from optometry or from physiotherapy. But the money is being spent in some very good places. I have to tell you that you're taking it away and you're spending it in ways that cannot be justifiable in terms of this particular tax. There's the whole issue about money being spent on sewers. That was quite the debate here in the Legislature—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It's not true.

Mr Prue: As you know, Mr Caplan, it is very true. It is absolutely true that some of the money is being spent on areas outside what one would normally classify the health system. I'll get to that in a minute. But what's particularly galling, I think, in terms of this bill is that all the money that's being raised—the money that this government is getting from the federal government and the money that this government is getting from this particular tax; we're looking this year at about \$2.5 billion in extra revenues, and we're looking next year at probably \$3.5 or \$4 billion in extra revenues—at the same time this money is being collected, there are services that are being cut.

I speak first to the chiropractic services. This is a biggie. This is some \$104 million that's being taken out of the system for this year, and it's being taken out this very month. People are now going to have to pay \$104 million for chiropractic services that they had not counted on at the beginning of this year, and indeed do not count on even now, and will be forced to pay out of their own pockets.

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We are looking at the delisting of optometrists. This is going to save some \$39 million and will take effect next year. For physiotherapists, it is going to save only some \$16 million, and it too will come out next year. That money is being taken out of the system at the same time there is more and more money available for this government and how it is able to raise funds.

We have seen that the government has some options, and I'll go to those options in a minute. But where is the health care premium going? We have a two-year total here. Let's look at 2004-05 first. When you add the increase in federal health transfers, which is enormous—a billion bucks—to the \$1.635 billion in new revenues from the McGuinty health tax, you get about \$2.6 billion of extra health-related revenue. This is a lot more than you are spending. This is a lot more than is contained in the budget book. If you look through that budget book, there's about \$200 million or \$300 million more than what you are spending in the health ministry. That's why—and I come back to it—we are very suspicious that other parts of the government are having their revenues increased, including the whole provision around sewers.

I remember the questions from last year. I remember the Premier and the Minister of Health standing in this House defending that sewers were part of health: If you don't clean the water, then people are going to get sick. But that is not the way the public sees this, nor is it the way the public should see it. This is infrastructure-related money that is being siphoned off from the health tax. People who pay the health tax expect that the money will be spent on health-related issues, so that they, in turn, can enjoy the best health system in the country, and possibly the best health system in the world, and in fact that is not where the money is going. It's why the government, I would suggest, has had to pad its so-called health-related spending with another \$200 million worth of projects, much of it sewer and water pipe.

For the year 2005-06, I would suggest it gets even worse. Page 12 of the budget states that health care spending will increase by only \$600 million between this fiscal year and next fiscal year. The government is raking in \$600 million more next year than it will this year on this health tax alone. In fact, their own figures show it's some \$800 million. That does not even go toward what the federal government is kicking in or what other revenues might be had by better times in income tax or government revenues. The reality is that the money will not be spent in health itself in the next fiscal year.

When I questioned the Minister of Finance in estimates the other day about the \$600 million and was

the money only going up \$600 million for next year, he reassured me that that is the projection, that's what he thinks is going to happen. Of course, the budget can change, and I acknowledge the budget can change. I'm telling this House that the budget should change. If you are taking this money from people who cannot afford it and are taking it for what they most desire—that is, a decent and good health system—you should at least have the courage to spend it on what the money was taken for in the first place. I do not see that that is going to happen, and this is what is very wrong with this regressive health tax. It pays for a whole plethora of goods and services and political initiatives that this government wants to take, but it does not lend itself directly to what the people are expecting from their health dollars. This is a real credibility gap and will continue to be a credibility gap for this government.

If you want people to believe that their health dollars are being spent wisely, if you want them to believe, when they see the monies coming out of their paycheques starting this July, if you want them to believe, when they are doing their income tax next February and March and see the actual amounts for all those who do not have a weekly pay envelope, who are either privately employed or who get their money from other sources, that their money is being spent wisely, I would suggest that you spend it on health-related issues, that you get away from sewers, you get away from water, you get away from those programs into which you are diverting the money at this time.

You might ask, and I think fairly, because I would if I were on the government side, "What is the alternative to this health care premium? We need the money. The hospitals are in dire straits. Doctors need a raise. We need to attract more nurses. Our children need to be immunized. Where do you get the money?" I'll tell you, there was a reasonable way to get it, but you were not interested in looking at it. You were more interested in taking the money from people who could not pay and who should not pay than you were in looking at other alternatives.

I would suggest that if you were making, in the last number of years, \$25,000 in Ontario, you had two governments in power at that time which were pretty much the same. You had the Harris government in Ontario, that wanted to cut everything, and you had a Liberal government, led by Jean Chrétien at the time in Ottawa, who wanted to cut everything as well. If you were around in those days, you got a 45% tax decrease from the Harris Conservatives and an 18% tax cut from the Martin Liberals. You might have thought that was all well and good at the time, and I guess it was more money in your pocket, but you're rueing the day, now that the schools are in collapse, hospitals don't have enough money, you're having to pay on the 407, the 100,000 other tax increases that you're going to see on everything and user fees to boot.

For the average person making \$25,000 a year, that translated to about \$733 from the provincial Conserva-

tives and \$527 from the federal Liberals. That means you got a \$ combined 1,200 gift in all those years of Mike Harris and Jean Chrétien. If you earned \$100,000, though, you were a whole lot better off—wow, were you better off if you earned \$100,000—because you got a 35% tax cut from the Harris Conservatives and an 18% tax cut from the Martin Liberals. That was \$5,100 from the Conservatives and \$4,500 from the Liberals, so you got \$9,600 in those years. If you were really rich—I'm going to get richer and richer—if you earned \$125,000 as an individual, you did really well too. You got a 30% tax cut from Harris and a 16% tax cut from Paul Martin, and that totalled \$11,500. If you earned \$150,000, you got a 28% tax cut from Mr Harris and 15% from Mr Martin, and that added up to a \$13,150 gift. If you earned \$200,000, then you took a 25% tax cut from Mr Harris and 13% from Mr Martin, and combined that's \$20,000 that you got in tax reductions.

The reason I'm giving all these figures is just to show who has disproportionately benefited by tax cuts and the whole regime that preceded the government opposite me today. The people who benefited the most from all that weren't the majority of our citizens; the people who benefited most from all that were those who earn a lot of money, those who can truly be classified as rich, those who are able to look after themselves, those who are able to buy what they need, those who are not, by any stretch of the imagination, facing or living in poverty every day.

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What would we have done? What would we have done that was different? Quite simply, we would have gone back and looked at those tax regimes to see where the money should be taken. If people got a \$20,000 tax cut—and I don't think they were that badly off eight years ago in this country—then they should be the ones who are paying a little bit more, not capped at \$900, which this bill does. They should be paying a little more. Whether that be \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$5,000, I leave to the accountants, the actuaries and the people who could actually look at the numbers. But certainly they were able to pay far better than the welfare mother, far better than the person living below the low-income cut-off figures, far better than a family of four which doesn't have the money and far better than those who rely on food banks. That's what you have failed to grasp. You have taken the money from the people who can least afford to pay it, and you have let off those at the upper end virtually scot-free.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I made the same argument.

Mr Prue: I'm glad to see the member opposite here say that he made the same argument. I wish he had been a little more forceful in his caucus with that same argument. Had he been more forceful, we wouldn't have had such a bad bill in front of us here today.

This is not in their financial plan. That's why I'm not going to vote for this particular financial plan. I have to tell you, I don't think they're very proud of their financial plan anyway. I looked; I tried to find out when the

Liberals dreamed this one up. Did they dream it up when they talked about Affordable, Responsible Change? I read through all this. There isn't one single line in this Affordable, Responsible Change where they were going to raise a health premium. Not once did they talk about the necessity of taking money from the poor. Not once did they talk about changing the tax rates that would arrange for more money. They said they didn't need any more. They even had some accountants and people who said that this was structurally sound, which I find a bit of a laugh. They had Mr David Hall from Vista Economics, who said that this was all going to work; they had Warren Jestin, who said it was all going to work; and Jack Marmer, who said it was all going to work. And yet, it survived about one day of their new government when they discovered that there was a deficit. The whole thing sort of fell apart. But when they were out there a year ago on the hustings, nowhere did they say that they were going to have to raise \$1.6 billion this year or \$2.4 billion next year in regressive taxes.

I would think that they aren't very proud of what they have done or why they've had to do it. Today I got this little booklet, *Getting Results for Ontario*. I had to smile because it's all full of pap and feel-good things that they think they have done.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Would you call it government advertising?

Mr Prue: I would absolutely call it government advertising.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I don't know. I looked through this. It talks about getting results for Ontario, it talks about success for students. Then I turn to better health. We all want better health. We all know that better health is needed. I've said it before and I'll say it again in the same speech: The hospitals, nurses, doctors, programs and MRIs, all of the things that the people of this province need, they expect to be delivered. But nowhere in this very glossy and expensive publication on the first anniversary of this government does it say a single word about this bill. Nowhere does it say, "We raised \$1.6 billion of your money this year, \$2.4 billion of your money next year, and the money we raised is equitable, fair and needed to be done." That's nowhere in this entire booklet of major accomplishments. And yet, this is the singular accomplishment that people will talk about years and years from now, that what this government was famous for was this very regressive health tax. That is the issue that is still out there on the streets. It is still the issue that is being debated. It is still the issue that worries people about whether this government is or is not keeping its promises.

It says throughout here "better health," "shorter waiting times," "more family access," but it doesn't say anywhere who's paying for it. It doesn't talk about the disproportionality of your bill. It doesn't talk about people on low-income cut-off figures paying more than they should. It doesn't talk about tax holidays for the rich. It doesn't talk about corporations not paying their fair share

of taxes. It doesn't talk about corporations in Ontario that in fact do not pay any income tax this year, that did not pay any income tax last year. In fact, you can go back for some 10 years and you will find very large corporations in the province of Ontario that have not put one dime into the coffers of this province. That's what it doesn't talk about. It talks about the programs you deliver, but it doesn't talk about how you're paying for them.

That is why I think this government is not at all proud of this bill. If you were proud of this bill, you would be standing up everywhere and telling people that the money you're taking from them is fair, that the money you are taking from them is not disproportionate, that the money is being used for exactly the purposes they want. You would be telling them that you could do everything, with all that money you're getting from the federal government, to save chiropractic services, physiotherapy services, optometry services. None of that is in this book—none of it, not a thing. If you think people are going to be talking about the feel-good, positive health care results you have in here and not the negative things, I think you are sorely mistaken. It's not in your financial plan. It's not in your progress report.

What is happening? I had to smile this morning when I saw this newspaper article. It's fairly new. It came from Canada NewsWire. It came out over the weekend, October 17, 2004. Mr Speaker, with your permission, I'd just like to read what is starting to happen as a result of this regressive legislation, and I quote from this Canada NewsWire. It's from a little town: Mitchell, Ontario.

"Members of United Steelworkers of America Local 719 have ratified a new three-year collective agreement by 84% with Cooper Standard Automotive Canada Ltd in this community about 60 kilometres north of London.

"The agreement provides general wage increases of 70 cents per hour plus quarterly cost-of-living adjustments over the three-year term. There is also an additional \$1.05-per-hour increase for skilled trades employees. The agreement also provides substantial improvements in pension and health care benefits and one additional paid holiday per year."

Up until this point, this sounds like your standard agreement that is probably ratified 100 times around the province of Ontario. Every worker expects that they're probably going to get a raise. Every worker bargains for a 2% or 3% increase. Every worker looks for another paid holiday or whatever is contained within the collective agreement. But then we get right to the whole nub of the issue. It goes on to say:

"To offset the damage inflicted by the McGuinty government's regressive budget, each employee will receive an annual lump sum payment of \$200 to offset the cost of the Ontario health tax. The employer will also pay \$40 toward the cost of eye examinations, which are no longer covered by OHIP."

Then it goes on to quote union official Doug Brown:

"If employers want to bankroll the right-wing political parties and their slash-and-burn health care agenda then it is only right that they pay for the hardship caused

to our members and their families,' said ... representative Doug Brown."

What is happening is precisely what we said in this Legislature last spring was going to happen. When the collective bargaining process starts to work, when collective agreements are negotiated, people will be asking again that the companies for whom they work, by whom they are paid and with whom they have a contract get involved in the same kinds of payments that used to be made for OHIP prior to 1989. This is the first, I'm sure, of many bargainings that are taking place in the province of Ontario. The United Steelworkers are in the forefront on this issue, and they have ensured that their members get back \$200 of the amount of money that they are being forced to pay and \$40 toward eye examinations. They are only the first of many such collective agreements that are going to be signed this year and next.

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What does that do to the economy of the province that this government talked so much about all the time? What is it going to do when wage costs in these locations start to spiral? It may be small potatoes to them that it's only \$200 plus \$40 in a collective agreement, but that is an additional \$240 which this company, Cooper-Standard Automotive Canada Ltd, is now going to have to pay as a cost of doing business in Ontario. That is \$240 per employee more than they had to pay prior to this round of collective bargaining. It is a cost which they are going to have to pay and, I would suggest to you, every employer is probably going to have to pay within the next couple of years as collective bargaining starts to take hold on this issue.

The province of Ontario has tens of thousands of employees. Most of those employees are covered under collective agreements, and the majority of those are members of OPSEU. I would suggest that this is going to be a bargaining demand that this very government is going to have to look at, and it is a bargaining demand that is going to be, I think, pushed very hard in the upcoming bargaining that this province is going to do with its unionized workers.

This was suggested last spring in this Legislature and, I think, was pooh-poohed on the other side. I'm glad to see that the Minister of Finance has come in to hear the last little part—

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm sorry I missed the first part of your remarks, but I'll watch them later.

Mr Prue: OK. Maybe you'll change your mind.

This is what is happening out there. People are starting to look very much at how they have been affected by this particular bill, Bill 106, which has been regressive to poorer people, to middle-income people, to unionized people, to those people who can no longer afford the costs of medicine in Ontario. In fact, they have started, through their union and collective action, to say, "If we are going to have to bear these costs through this regressive tax, then we are going to make sure the money comes from our employer."

I thought it was kind of cute. They said, and I want to quote that again: "If employers want to bankroll the right-wing political parties and their slash-and-burn health care agenda, then it is only right that they pay for the hardship caused to our members and their families."

Hon Mr Sorbara: Michael, you don't believe that rhetoric, do you?

Mr Prue: I liked it. I like it a lot. Obviously, you don't like it one bit, and I don't expect you to like it one bit.

People are fighting back, and I invite them to continue to do that, because this government is now a year old. This government has come out with this little piece of pap here today, telling us how good everything is and how good everything is going to be. They're talking about everything except the real issue, and the real issue is the economy of the average person, the tax rates of the average person, how the money is collected from the average person, and how it is being spent—not always wisely—on their behalf.

I think the government has a great deal to learn on this issue. I don't expect that the Minister of Finance, who has come here to listen to the last portion of my speech, is going to change his mind very much. He certainly did not do so in estimates when I was questioning him about the \$600-million increase for next year in health care, which is dwarfed by the amount of money that will be coming in from this health tax and from the monies from the federal government and, I suppose, slightly from the improving economy.

Let me say in conclusion—and I guess I'm not going to use my whole hour here—

Hon Mr Sorbara: Aw.

Mr Prue: You want me to use my whole hour? I don't want to repeat myself. I've always prided myself on saying exactly what needed to be said, but what you've done in your first year has certainly not been enough. What you are continuing to do and what you will continue to do to the people of this province with this regressive bill will be remembered long after this first year and your honeymoon is long over.

This is a regressive piece of legislation. It ought not to be passed. It should be withdrawn. If you need \$2.4 billion in extra revenues, be honest about it. Take it from those who can afford to pay it. Do not take it from those least able to pay. Certainly, do not take it from those people who live below the poverty line and those people who need every single penny they can get in order to look after themselves and their children.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I know you'll want to revisit this.

Mr Prue: I don't want to revisit one word, Minister, because you have it wrong. If you won't listen to me, then please, start listening to the people of Ontario. They have spoken to you many times on this. I don't think you've gotten very many letters congratulating you for gouging them on this tax. I would like to see even one: "Thank you very much, Mr Minister, for gouging me on this tax." "Thank you very much, Mr Minister; I live below the poverty line and I'm having to pay hundreds of

dollars more." I don't think I'm going to see any letters like that, and until you can start producing those, I don't believe there are such people out there.

Having said that, I think I've spoken enough on the issue. I will leave the whole issue of the Hospital for Sick Children and other hospitals to other speakers. I wanted to just talk to the one issue, and that is, how the health premium is raised, how unfairly it is being raised, how regressive it is, and how this government, if they want to stand up for the majority of Ontarians, can do so much better.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to join this debate. The member opposite spent quite a bit of time speaking about the health care premium and, indeed, it was an important part of our budget.

I think it's important for people to know that there's a group in Ontario known, affectionately, as the baby boomers. One wonders why they call them baby boomers when they are actually an aging group, but that's a different debate. But that group is a large group in Ontario's economy and in our dynamic. They are in excess of some three million persons.

Generally, baby boomers are characterized as having been born between 1947 and 1964. There are over three million of them. They will soon, in some cases, and at not too late a date, be accessing our health care system for one reason or another. We have to prepare ourselves for that huge number of persons. They actually represent 40% of the current workforce in Ontario. That's a lot of persons. In the baby boom years, they represent 25% of our total population.

I want to say to the member opposite, though, that nearly four million Ontarian tax filers, or about 43%, including about 815,000 seniors, will not pay any premium, and about 37% of Ontario families will not pay any premium. So it's not that everyone is going to be paying. We have to remember and remind persons that it's on their taxable income, not their income, that this premium is assigned to. I think it's very important that those making up to \$20,000 of taxable income will pay nothing.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to compliment the member for Beaches-East York on his leadoff.

Hon Mr Sorbara: There's a love affair across the aisle.

Mr Dunlop: The fact of the matter is, he zeroed in on a very serious problem, and that's the health premium, the health tax. This is a government that went all through the provincial election and promised "no tax increases." We've said this in the House before, but I remember somebody named Dalton McGuinty on the TV screen, promising to millions of people, "I will not raise your taxes." Then he turns around and puts this huge tax burden on the citizens of the province of Ontario. Mr Prue has every right to bring forth in his comments everything that he actually said because, as far as I'm concerned, there was nothing that he said that was wrong in his comments. So I thank him for that.

Interjection.

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Mr Dunlop: Well, the one thing is, he made his comments as clear as he possibly could. Mr McGuinty did not make his comments clear to the citizens of Ontario. We all know that. He broke a major, major promise when he put in the health premium. It's as simple as that.

It's amazing, when you start talking about broken promises in this House, that all of a sudden the members of the government start to yell and scream and heckle you. It's amazing; I can't believe it. As soon as you say it's a tax increase, they don't seem to want to co-operate. I wasn't heckling anybody through these speeches today, and I get up for a two-minute hit and all of a sudden I'm heckled because I talk about this large tax increase that the Premier brought forth against the will of the citizens of Ontario.

I thank the member from Beaches-East York for his comments. We in the Progressive Conservative caucus obviously don't agree on a lot of things with the New Democratic Party, but I can tell you that we certainly agree on this one, and I think the citizens of Ontario will agree with us as well.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words at this point.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Last week, it looked like I was going to have to speak on this bill; somebody said, "You have to say a few remarks this afternoon on Bill 106." So I pulled out the bill and looked: An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. I remember that act, of course, because it was passed by our government, and I'm looking for references to that act. Lo and behold, I go to the explanatory note and the thing that pops out is, "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose a tax called the Ontario Health Premium."

If this was such a good little bit of business, how is it that the government camouflages—hides—that particular premium and uses the small measures that are being made with respect to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the title of the bill? If it was so good, get out there, trumpet it, have a bill that talks about it very clearly. Don't try to hide it in the explanatory notes and make it appear as if what the bill is really about has something to do with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

I guess, if I were a Liberal, I'd try to hide it too. The fact of the matter is that this new tax that Mr McGuinty brought in, after he promised in the election that he wouldn't impose any more new taxes, is terribly regressive. It attacks modest- and middle-income families overwhelmingly. These are the folks who are paying the overwhelming majority of the \$2.4 billion this government is going to raise through this measure. I wouldn't want to talk about it either, if I were a Liberal.

I also wouldn't want to talk about the fact that in the budget we get to divert some of this premium money and spend it on sewer pipes and advertising for the Ministry of Tourism. I'll bet that's not highlighted in the glossy little book the government just put out about this.

This tax is very regressive. It hits modest- and middle-income families. Some of the money is even being diverted for non-health care services. What a shame.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to add to the comments made by the member from Beaches-East York and, most appropriately, the statements made by our colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex with respect to a very large seniors population here in Ontario.

We have over 1.5 million seniors in our province, which represents about 12.6% of the population, or 40% of the seniors population. I have to say that I haven't heard anything when it comes to speaking positively with respect to those people in need, with respect to the less fortunate. When the member speaks about health care, it's not only emergency services, quality of services and the number of beds, nurses and doctors. It addresses everything with respect to providing total health care, especially to those who can't speak for themselves.

Since taking over the government a year ago, we can be proud of the record we have and the positive changes we have made to the health care system. We have, for example, some of the very positive—and don't forget that we had to make some major changes after eight or nine years of Conservative government. We are changing the standards for seniors in every nursing and retirement home. We have given free vaccine to all our kids in Ontario and \$469 million more to reduce wait times for various emergency services. This is all money that has been allocated for the benefit of the health care system in Ontario in the past year alone. And on top of that, we have improved care for women with cancer by providing more MRI machines in Ontario, where they have a right to get health care services.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches-East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr Prue: I would like to thank the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, the Conservative Party member for Simcoe North, my colleague from Nickel Belt and, finally, the member from York West.

A few of the comments that were made—you know, you can speak for 45 minutes but they don't often listen to what you have to say. The first speaker concentrated on the fact that people with under \$20,000 income don't pay anything. Not once did I ever suggest, nor do I believe, that people under \$20,000 pay. They shouldn't pay. I'm glad they don't pay. But I don't think that people at \$25,000 should be paying either or that people below the poverty line should be paying. That was the gist and the import of my speech. I'm trying to tell this government that you have set the standard far too low. If people living under the low-income cut-off figures are still being forced to pay, then this is a regressive piece of legislation, and that's what it is.

I comment on my colleague from Simcoe North: Yes, the Premier in fact stood in this very House trying to defend this bill. He did so, and with much consternation I have to tell you, and the press was not very happy outside throughout this entire affair last spring. He tried to hide that it was a tax measure, and it wasn't until we actually

saw the fine print on Bill 106 that it was a tax measure. At first, they were trying to say it was a health premium. Then my colleague said they're trying to hide this very exemplary thing, and she went on to talk about the little one-year booklet.

Last but not least, the last speaker, from York West: There's no question that health care is needed. There's no question that health care is beyond hospitals and doctors. It is in every facet of what we do. But the question of this bill, and this bill alone, is how do you pay for it? And when you end up paying for it in such a regressive way, then it is not a good bill, no matter how laudable the end is.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, I understand right now the government House leader has asked for a meeting. I was wondering if I might ask for unanimous consent to stand down my remaining 13 minutes to another time during this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked for unanimous consent to stand down his 13 minutes until some time further in the debate. Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have the honour and pleasure today of speaking to this Legislature about one of the priorities of our government and what I think is certainly a priority of the people in my riding of Oakville and the people of our province, and that's the issue of health care.

We're talking about a very substantial investment on behalf of the people of Ontario: \$1.6 billion in this fiscal year, \$2.3 billion in the next year and up to \$2.6 billion by the fourth year. I think it's important that all members of the House understand how this premium will work. I've heard a lot of opinions as to how it will work. Maybe we should deal with the facts of how it will work.

The Ontario health premium is deducted from employee pay and pension cheques through the income tax system. Individuals with a taxable income of more than \$20,000 a year would pay the premium, meaning that any individual in Ontario with an income under \$20,000 would pay no premium at all. The full-year premiums would range from \$60 a year all the way up to \$900 a year for people with a taxable income of \$21,000 or more. The premiums we've implemented for 2004 would be half of those amounts.

This will provide us with the income we need to help fund the \$2.2 billion of additional investments that are being made by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on behalf of the citizens of Ontario this year. It'll contribute \$1.6 billion of that extra \$2.2 billion.

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What are we trying to do? We're trying to shorten wait times, we're trying to expand primary and community-based care and we're trying to increase the number of doctors and nurses and try to do something about the shortage we've inherited when it comes to services for people of Ontario in the number of doctors and nurses we have. We're trying to deliver results in a much more cost-

effective manner, ensuring that our system has the resources it needs.

As I mentioned earlier, individuals with a taxable income of \$20,000 or less pay absolutely not one cent for the health premium. That means that 43% of all Ontario tax filers and over 48% of Ontario senior citizen tax filers would pay absolutely no premium at all. Also built into the legislation is a provision for a review of the premium within five years. There is also a provision that would require the public accounts process to report on how the revenue is being used to invest in health care in Ontario.

When taken together with the benefits and credits for lower-income individuals and families, income tax rates that rise with income, and surtaxes, Ontario will still have one of the most progressive tax systems in all of Canada, even when you take this premium into account. For example, if the premium were fully implemented this year, the overall effective tax rate in Ontario, including the premium, for a single individual with no dependents would be under 15% on taxable income of \$25,000, just over 22% on taxable income of \$55,000 and almost 40% on taxable income of \$250,000.

In conclusion, I would remind members that health care and education are both priorities of the people of this province and of our government. As has been previously noted, health expenditures in this province amount to some 45% of total program spending. The cost of health care in this province is growing at approximately 7% a year. This health premium provides \$1.6 billion of that \$2.2 billion in additional investment.

What do we want to see over the next four years? What do we think this province needs to see to bring the type of health care that we need? We intend to hire 8,000 more full-time nurses, we intend to provide home care for over 95,000 additional Ontarians, long-term-care beds for more than 3,700 people, nine new MRI and CT scan sites and the delivery of 150 family health teams, health costs to 75% from 50% by 2007 in our funding of the public health care system and also free chicken pox, meningitis or pneumonia vaccinations for children, which were costing families more than \$600 a year per child. We'd also like to provide funding for an additional 9,000 cataract surgeries each year and for nine new MRI and CT sites by 2005.

In conclusion, what I'm saying is I don't think we anticipated having to bring in a health care premium. When we discovered what was truly in the books after we formed the new government, we realized that it was something we would have to do and something we needed to do to invest in our priority, which is health care in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: One second. I didn't hear a request to split time, so you may want to ask.

Mr Flynn: Mr Speaker, I apologize. I was taken aback by the member—

The Deputy Speaker: Just ask the question that I think you might want to ask.

Mr Flynn: I would like to inform you that I'm sharing my time with the member for Guelph-Wellington.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent to share the time with the member for Guelph-Wellington. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed. The member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You sort that out so beautifully.

I'm pleased to speak this afternoon on Bill 106. My copy of this bill is titled An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994. I'm not sure about the copy the member from Nickel Belt is looking at, but mine certainly identifies that this is an act to implement certain budget measures, and certainly the health tax or health premium, whichever you wish to call it, is prime among the issues that are addressed in this bill.

When we look at the way the government of Ontario spends money, 45% of the money we spend on programs goes to health care. That has been growing at a rate of 7% a year. That is simply unsustainable. If we were to project that sort of growth rate out, we would be having health care consuming 50%, 60%, 70%. We have an unsustainable situation in Ontario. It is for that reason that we are bringing in the health premium, to make sure that we have adequate funding to supply health care to the residents of Ontario. We expect this measure will raise \$1.6 billion of the \$2.2 billion in additional investments that our government is making in health care this year. By the fourth year, this health tax or premium will raise up to \$2.6 billion of the \$4.8 billion in additional investments that we plan to make in health care.

It's important for people to understand what this health premium is going to bring them. It's going to bring more full-time nurses. It's going to bring additional access to home care for our seniors. It's going to improve health care in our long-term-care homes. It's going to provide additional vaccinations for our children. It's going to give us access, give us the ability to set up 150 family health teams, local community health teams where doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care workers can work together to deliver health care at the level where we can do it most effectively and most conveniently for our residents, which is in the community setting.

Over the length of this mandate, we will be providing Ontario's hospitals with \$11.3 billion in operating support this year, increasing at an average rate of 3.4% for each of the next several years. We will be providing \$600 million more to support primary care; that is, care provided by family doctors in the community. We'll be increasing spending on public health. We will be expanding community mental health services. We will be providing mental health services for an additional 78,600 patients by 2007-08. We will be continuing to look at expanding our public health system.

What I hear from people in my community is that they are so pleased that we are finally addressing home care, long-term care, community mental health and public

health services, because while there has been additional money that has gone into hospitals in some years of the previous Conservative government's mandate, what has been missing is increased funding for home care, for long-term care, for community mental health and public health, those things which are critically important to our citizens. There has been a lack of focus on primary and community care and community health teams.

These are the things we will be able to do with the health premium. I am very pleased that we are going to be able to bring better services to Ontarians.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Sorry; I got caught off guard. I thought the member was going to use all of her time up.

My colleagues and I were just talking here about some of the serious things that are happening today. I wanted to put on the record and have kind of a rebuttal to what the minister said today in response to a question from the member from Chatham-Kent, and that's to do with the closure of the three remaining hospitals in the province of Ontario dealing with very high-needs people.

It has come as a bit of a shock to our community. I know it's a cost-saving measure; there's no question about that.

In the city of Orillia and the district there's about a \$29.1-million payroll with the 680 employees who work at the Huronia Regional Centre. It appears that what the minister has done—and I was at her press conference and heard some of the comments from some of the stakeholders—it appears that what has happened in that particular cost-saving measure is that she's planning on closing the facility without a plan. We don't know what's going to happen to the close to 400 residents—people with very special needs, very high needs, and these are people who are very aged in many cases. What I'm getting back from my constituents is that it is a cost-saving measure. We don't know what we're going to do with the people residing in these facilities. Although it has been a plan since David Peterson's day, since 1987, to fully integrate them into society, the people with very special needs have a serious problem, and we don't know and the government doesn't know right now what will happen to those folks.

I wanted to make sure I got that on the record tonight, because I think this is something that's a long way from over. She might have made a quick announcement, but that's not dealing with the folks that live at the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia.

Ms Martel: I'm always interested when I hear Liberal members say or infer that they have to take this measure, this new regressive health tax that hits modest- and middle-income families, because of the debt, as if they didn't know anything about the debt before they went ahead and made the kind of promises they did during the election campaign—about 231 promises, if I recall correctly. It's probably worthwhile reminding the Liberals that of course they knew about the magnitude of the debt

and the problem that was coming, but that didn't stop them from making the promises they did.

In the estimates for the Ministry of Finance in June 2003—estimates which are very public, which are on the record, and there were a lot of media at the estimates on those days because we were reviewing Madame Ecker's budget—Mr Phillips, who was the Liberal finance critic, a long-time member of this assembly, well-established as a finance critic, was very clear. He talked about a \$5-billion risk in the budget of the former Progressive Conservative government. He said, "I therefore take it there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high-risk." Well, he's not kidding.

He wasn't the only one who made comments about a \$5-billion problem before the election, because another long-serving MPP from the Liberal party who is now in cabinet, Monte Kwinter, said this in August 2003 to Canadian Press: "Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter ... accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion."

Look, folks, the Liberals knew full well that we were in big trouble—about five billion dollars' worth of trouble—but that didn't stop you from making the promises, and you shouldn't fund those promises on the backs of low- and modest-income families.

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to health care. Our health care premium was not an easy decision for our government, nor for each of us individually as politicians.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Then why did your brother cancel it?

Mr Peterson: If you can remember back to 1987 and the great leaders in those days, Cam, we'd like to have that debate with you.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the Chair, please.

Mr Peterson: It was done with a great revelation of fiscal mismanagement, which not only included the budget deficit which was withheld from us—the member close to me has indicated that we knew about this. We thought it was a possibility; it was not a fact. There was a runaway increase in hospital spending and health care spending of 8% a year, with undisclosed deficits in probably all the hospitals, because the government had set a tone of non-disclosure, of non-transparency of the deficits in each of the hospitals. This was not the good Tory fiscal management we were used to in the 1960s and 1970s. This was not the party that had fiscal responsibility and fiscal concern.

I've had complaints in my own riding about the health care premium and about the reduction of services, but we have a sea change in government here. We are taking a long-range plan and we are looking at things on a non-political yearly basis. We have set a four-year plan between elections. We have said we'll eliminate the deficit in four years and have laid out a plan to do so. We have taken away all government-paid partisan advertising. We have released more information and have brought in new transparency laws so the deficits and the status of our fiscal position will be apparent to everyone.

If you wish to look at one of the greatest political icons in our country and their view on the deficit, ask Hazel McCallion. She said it was necessary, it was needed and it was the right thing to do.

Mr Jackson: It's interesting, on the one-year anniversary of this new government, that according to media reports they're up to 30 or 35, depending on your point of view, broken promises out of their 231 election promises.

The one that gives me the greatest concern is the fact that the Liberals promised a universal publicly funded health care system that gives us all the care we need, when we need it. That's what they promised. Then they go out and cause this health tax to raise \$1.2 billion more. They delist chiropractic and physiotherapy services and a few other services in moderation. They have more money than ever before in history for health care, and yet they have our hospitals on a starvation budget of fiscal restraint.

It's interesting, having sat in this House and listened to the Liberals for the last nine years—well, a total of 20 years. The health minister criticized the Tories in opposition for not spending enough on hospitals. Now he's saying publicly for the record, in estimates last week, that they inherited a culture the Tories helped to create which basically suggests of Ontario hospitals that whatever they would spend in excess of what was allocated would be paid off. That was our legacy. We paid our bills with our Ontario hospitals. This group seems to feel that for some reason all of these needs of people in hospitals are subject to a bottom line. Well, the bottom line is patient care.

The member from Guelph-Wellington made a comment about her government funding 3,400 long-term-care beds. I can assure her that her government hasn't approved one single long-term-care bed. These are the beds that were approved by the previous Mike Harris government, paid for in last year's budget, that you keep talking about with this deficit but that you seem to be wanting to take credit for now. That is double-dipping, double accounting and doubletalk to the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oakville has two minutes to reply.

Mr Flynn: Our goal here is quite simple and it's quite bold. We're trying to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians. It's that simple. Other parties have had a try at this. The New Democrats in the early 1990s and the Conservatives during the last term of government showed what they were capable of, and you were driving us and the health care system into bankruptcy. Somebody had to do something about that, and we're prepared to do something about that.

We know the province still faces some enormous fiscal challenges directly as a result of the previous government. We know what needs to be done. The decisions are difficult, the logic straightforward, and you could have applied it during your term of government. We've got to transform spending, we've got to balance the books and we've got to stick to our plan, or we simply risk the future prosperity of this province and the health care needs of our citizens.

By providing people with access to a range of health professionals at the right place and the right time, we will be able to transform health care in Ontario. Take a look at what we've been able to do this year, which previous governments simply were unable to do. We've already funded almost 2,500 full-time nursing positions, 1,600 more front-line staff for long-term care, nine new MRIs—as I said earlier, three more of them have been repatriated. Community mental health investments: Where were they during the terms of the two previous governments? Simply nothing.

Interjection.

Mr Flynn: You didn't put a penny into them, Cam, you know that. You didn't put a cent into mental health programs when you had the opportunity. Free vaccines for kids. It's easy to sit over there and say, "We'd do this and we'd do that." You had the chance to do that. You almost drove this province into bankruptcy, and you almost drove our hospitals into bankruptcy.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure to speak on Bill 106 today. We call it the health tax bill. I've got a copy of it here somewhere, but it's buried in amongst these other papers.

What did we hear last summer? "I will not raise your taxes." How many times did we hear it? Over and over and over again. Dalton McGuinty campaigned and made this unequivocal promise to the people of Ontario: "I will not raise your taxes." We didn't even have a budget and he lifts the cap on hydro rates. He rolls back the private school tax credit, retroactively. He eliminates the hydro rate and promises to keep that in until 2006. But probably the one broken promise—we're up to somewhere in the 30s now—that seems to have resonated the loudest across this province, from Windsor to Moose Factory, is the broken promise about raising taxes when it came to a health care tax. Nothing that has ever happened in this government's term has quite upset people the way this measure of this government has. This health care premium hits working Ontarians right where they can least afford it, right in the pocketbook, and it is an absolute—you know what.

I'm going to give you some of the comments that are here on this new tax. One person says, "Are there any recall measures in Ontario similar to those in the US?"

"This is totally unacceptable. If they campaigned on raising taxes in order to fulfill campaign promises, then at least they would have been honest about it." But no, they never told people they were going to raise taxes. They weren't honest about what they were going to do in their platform in very many ways, a platform that they insisted over and over again was independently verified and carefully costed. We now find out that that platform would cost the taxpayers of Ontario more than three times what they said it would cost in their election campaign.

By the time it is fully implemented in 2007, this health care tax will be raising this government \$2.6 billion a

year. This at a time when their hydro rates have gone up, property taxes have escalated considerably and the cost of gas in this province is much higher than it was at the time this government was elected. On top of all those things, this government in the May budget instituted a health tax. First they tried to say it was a premium, and then they realized that by law they had to call it a tax because they are collecting it by way of the Income Tax Act. We're trying to find some truth in anything they've said here, but it is seemingly impossible to do.

What did they say they were going to do with this tax? They were going to deliver better, more improved, broader health care services. What do we find out about a week after the budget? They're putting this money into sewer pipe and other kinds of infrastructure programs. There's no question that you can stretch it and say that there's a relationship—and there is a relationship between health and clean water—but there is not a relationship between telling the people that you're going to be putting health care dollars into an infrastructure program. We have ministries that look after infrastructure. We even have a public infrastructure ministry. We have an environment ministry, a transportation ministry and all the other ministries that look after the infrastructure of the province. It is not the job of the health ministry, other than in the building of health-related facilities, to be dealing with infrastructure dollars. But what were they going to do? They were going to take this money and put it into sewer pipe across this province, and they felt that was justified. That was just another underhanded way of taking your money and spending it where they see fit to do so. That is simply not acceptable to the people of Ontario.

That, in essence, is probably what people will find the most difficult about what this government has done, and that is having broken faith with the people of Ontario and saying they were not going to do something and then doing exactly that or, conversely, saying they would do something and not doing it.

I have an article here from a gentleman who writes for Osprey news services. It actually has a little bit about my riding, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in there as well. He talks about not having voted for me, and he really regrets it now. Yes, he really regrets it. I don't think it's personal, but he regrets having voted Liberal. He uses the three-letter word that begins with "L" and ends with "E," but I can't use it in here. He uses it over and over and over again when describing the Liberals' first year in office:

"This brings me to the health care premium, which is a new tax. It's a dedicated tax. The rich are annoyed by it, the poor won't pay it and the middle class get it in the ear again. And, oh, yes, it's for health care, and our hospitals," and blah, blah, blah, and it will make your whites whiter and sparkle your smile.

He talks about how the people of the province of Ontario—as I said, the title is, "To Err Is Human; To Forgive Is Unlikely." That's exactly what is happening across Ontario. The people of the province of Ontario

realize—now, he's speaking of himself. He's the one who's erred. This government has broken faith. He erred by voting for them, but he will not forget it, he will not forgive them, and in 2007, he will be exercising his democratic franchise in a different fashion. If he's still living in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I trust that will be for yours truly.

The other thing they said is that we are going—I heard the now Premier McGuinty talk about reducing wait times and I've heard the Minister of Health go on ad infinitum about all the improvements they've made and how they're eliminating wait times. What did they do? They bought, with our money, this health care premium—they took it out of our pockets—MRIs that were working quite well and servicing the people of the province. They got on this fixation: "We've got to own the MRIs. We can't just let someone else own them and allow the public and the government and the taxpayers to pay for the service." People want to know that health care services are there. They're less caught up as to whether or not a private individual delivers the service, so long as it is paid for, publicly accessible and funded by the province. But, no, they took our dollars that could have been put into new and better health care and bought existing health care. That's false economy and it's just to try to keep in step with their philosophy, but it's not delivering better health care.

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I have a constituent, Maureen Reid, who got tired of Minister Smitherman's shorter waiting times, so she decided she had to go to Laval, Quebec, to have her hip replaced. Is that delivering health care for the people of Ontario when and where they need it? That's his answer to reducing waiting times: Send them to the province of Quebec or some other jurisdiction to have the procedures done. That will reduce waiting times here in Ontario. We'll have somebody else doing it. That's really delivering health care. The leading province in this country, the province that people look to for leadership in this country, and that's what they do: "Oh, we've got to reduce waiting times. Send them to some other province to get their health care." That's the answer of this government.

Another thing about this premium has me and over 4,000 people in my riding particularly upset. I think it has people all over Ontario upset, particularly the members of the Canadian Armed Forces stationed at CFB Petawawa: What a shock to them when they found that a service they don't even receive from Ontario, health care, will still be taxed on their paycheques. That is so unfair and regressive, and it is clearly a manifestation of what this government is. It is insatiably addicted to taxation and will do anything, by any means, to get into your pockets and remove anything of worth. So the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, whose health care is the sole responsibility of the federal government, are now paying this health care tax to Ontario. That is a shame. It's despicable. That policy should be reversed immediately. This government just doesn't seem to have any idea of the difference between right and wrong, and that is wrong.

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): That's a logical statement.

Mr Yakabuski: We have to point it out to them because they certainly can't figure it out themselves.

They had these big meetings back in the summertime about how Paul Martin was going to fix health care for a generation or whatever he termed it as, a long time anyway, and Mr McGuinty came out there and made this historic agreement. Ontario is now getting about \$1.3 billion in additional funding from the federal government for health care—new money. They didn't count on that new funding when they tabled this budget. Are they now saying to the people of Ontario, "Hey, we've got a new income source"? I suspect that we're going to see more money from the federal government. They're wallowing in money: \$9.1 billion in surplus and already over \$4 billion this fiscal year. I would certainly expect that the government of Ontario, through no sound management of their own, is going to have some more money in their hands to deal with. It's a shame that low-income working families and seniors in Ontario are going to continue to pay this tax even though they are not—the government of Ontario has secured new sources of revenue and this should be reversed immediately.

On top of all that we're paying more, but yes, you guessed it, we're getting less. On top of this new premium or new tax that they're gouging out of the people of Ontario, we're now getting less services: delisting chiropractic services and physiotherapy, eliminating eye examinations for some individuals.

I want to talk a little bit in my remaining time—because the clock does tick down here, it seems, very fast when I'm speaking—about hospital funding. What about hospital funding? They're taking all of this money. Look at the revenue projections for the government, the province in general. They're way up. They're taking all of this money. What are we doing about hospital funding? I just saw today that they're talking about a \$45-million cut at Sick Kids in Toronto. I see hospitals in my riding—the Deep River hospital—whose increase in funding is about 1%. The Ottawa Hospital, which is one of the main tertiary care centres for people in my riding, is getting less than 2%. But the minister tells them, "I expect you to deliver more services." Well, it doesn't compute. You've got to give these hospitals the tools they need to work with if you expect them to deliver more services.

It's a one-way street for this minister. He's running the ministry like a dictatorship almost. He's got these accountability agreements. Hospitals aren't really sure what's expected of them at this point, in any detailed way. They're being told in no uncertain terms that they're going to be expected to toe the line, but they don't know where that line is going to be.

Another thing, and it's particularly painful in rural Ontario, is what this government has done in the last year to rural Ontario. They're talking about passing on the gas tax to the city of Toronto; or perhaps any city that has a public transit system, I guess, is the criterion they're

using. What about all of those municipalities elsewhere in Ontario that have the same—do we have five million people in the city of Pembroke? No, we don't. Do we have the same infrastructure issues on a different scale? Yes, we absolutely do. Where is the gas tax for municipalities across the board in Ontario? Even the federal government has said that if there is going to be a gas tax for municipalities, it will be available to all municipalities, not those with a public transit system. This is punitive and patently unfair to rural people. Where is the rural focus of this government? Where is the heart for rural people in this government? It doesn't seem to have any concern or care at all for rural people.

What about the municipal drainage funding that the Ministry of Agriculture pulled this year?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): It's still there.

Mr Yakabuski: Pulled it. And when somebody actually told them what a bad idea it was, they brought in interim funding. To even think that it would be a worthy consideration to pull that funding shows that this government is out of step and out of touch with rural Ontario, and it needs to be brought back into focus.

The Premier, even on BSE funding—down at the plowing match and he's got no money for BSE: "Can't help you. Sorry, we've got nothing for you." But, all of a sudden, they come up with \$30 million. Where did they take it from? What are they doing with it? How many weeks have passed now and we still haven't heard a word about how that is going to filter down to the people in the agricultural industry.

This government is lost. It's lost. I think the compass fell into one of the manholes that they were fixing with health care dollars back in the spring, because they just don't seem to have any idea of what's going on in rural Ontario.

Now I want to talk a little bit more about some of the comments from people. Here's one from the president of the Ontario Chiropractic Association: "There's a great concern that a number of people will not be able to get effective care for their musculoskeletal disorders that they're getting right now." Delist chiropractic services, and what do you get? You get problems.

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How about this? "That is going to eat into household budgets to a considerable extent. It's part of why we ratcheted our growth forecast downward to 2.5%. That combined with higher oil prices." Yes, higher oil prices, which have been consistently over \$50 a barrel in this last little while, are having a tremendous negative effect on people's ability to pay their bills. On top of this, on July 1 they get hit with health care tax. We're only one year into this government and it's already the straw that's going to break its back. People are not going to forget it or forgive it. This government will fail in its commitment, and that was to bring better health care to the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I appreciate what the member had to say. I think the point I want to focus on actually has to do

with the new federal money he referenced. I think there was certainly some expectation out there that with the new federal money that's coming into Ontario, this government would be in a position to reverse some of the very difficult and unfair decisions it has made with respect to health care—for example, the decision to cut people's access to chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services—or, better yet, a decision to reverse or end the very unfair, unbalanced, regressive health care tax that has been imposed by the government.

I was at a scrum that was held with the Minister of Health a day after the accord was reached. It was held right at the east door at 3 o'clock the day after. Mr Smitherman was asked by the media if he could guarantee that the new federal health money coming from the Liberals was going to be used for health care in Ontario. I was astonished to hear Mr Smitherman say he could not guarantee that, that it was going to be a decision that would have to be made by Ontario's Minister of Finance.

Can you imagine? Here we are getting new federal money that is supposed to be for health care services, and the Minister of Health in the province of Ontario tells the media—and I stood there and listened to him say it twice—that he could not guarantee that that new federal money for health care would indeed be used for health care. Why should I be surprised? After all, this is a government that used the money from the health tax to pay for sewer pipes this year and to pay for advertising at the Ministry of Tourism. So the track record is already in place and the precedent has already been set, and it's going to be very interesting to see just where those new federal health dollars actually end up.

Mr Brown: I'm always interested in the comments by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I want to talk a little bit about what my constituents expect from the health dollars that are spent every year in the province. In the long-term-care sector, we've seen in Algoma-Manitoulin—and I suspect in most parts of rural Ontario and across Ontario as a whole—increased funding of almost \$900,000 to our long-term-care facilities to ensure that we have nurses around the clock in those facilities. We have seen a provision that makes sure that the clients—residents in long-term-care facilities—will receive, at a minimum, two baths a week. That does not seem to me to be a waste of health care dollars. It seems to be something that my constituents are very happy with.

I was out recently, as many members would do, with the people serving Meals on Wheels in Elliot Lake. I was out with the good volunteers at Huron Lodge: Marg Rekmans and Fred Mann, as a matter of fact. I was told afterwards by the manager of Huron Lodge that for the first time in many years they have seen a real increase in the amount of money that Huron Lodge will receive in terms of their annual budget. Gil Contant was very appreciative of that. So I think when the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke wants to talk about rural Ontario, he should discuss all of these matters.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to comment on the debate by my colleague from Renfrew-

Nipissing-Pembroke. As always, he goes to the heart of the issue.

With regard to health care spending particularly, and the effect of this government on people right across this province in the health care portfolio, Speaker, you'll recall that in question period this past week, in response to a question from myself, rather than answer the question, the Minister of Health stood in his place so arrogantly and referred to me as "the member from two-tier." Well, what the minister, of course, doesn't want the people of this province to know is that in the first budget of this government, he and the Minister of Finance created the sixth tier of health care in this province. The fact of the matter is that he privatized three health care services that up until then were largely covered by OHIP: chiropractic services, optometry services and physiotherapy. That's a shame, so much so that literally thousands of people are presenting petitions in this House that talk about the some 1.2 million people in this province who no longer can afford chiropractic services and optometry services and physiotherapy services and that talk about the arrogance of a government that on the one hand provides the spin to people that they care about health care and then simply throws out a lot of people in this province who depend on those basic health care services. With this budget, they have disenfranchised those people and relegated them to privatized services without any help from this government.

Mr Prue: It is always a pleasure to listen to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—not that I agree with him in everything he says, but he certainly brings a different perspective to a guy from the big city when he talks about small-town and rural Ontario.

But a couple of the things he did have to say struck home, and that is that people of low and modest income and seniors are very upset about this budget. I heard some of the members opposite use figures like 30% of low-income people aren't going to have to pay anything and 48% of seniors aren't going to have to pay anything, but the reality is that 70% of the population of this province is affected by this tax, most of them in a very negative way. There are very few people who earn salaries of \$150,000 to \$200,000 and more, who are going to pay a pittance. The majority of people who are going to be forced to pay are those who are in the \$25,000 to \$45,000 range, because that's where the bulk of the monies are. It is the same for our senior citizens. Quite frankly, although a lot of them have incomes that are at \$20,000 or less, there are certainly a great number of senior citizens who have struggled all of their lives to make sure they were financially capable to look after their needs by the time they retired, and they too are going to be hit by this regressive tax. If they only have an income of \$30,000 a year, they are going to pay, and if there are a husband and wife who are fortunate enough to still be together after they have become seniors and they each have an income of that amount, then they are going to pay double. It is a time of life when there are higher costs for everything: higher drug costs, higher premiums to pay on

insurance. This is just another indication that this government is not knowing or caring about these people as much as they should.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

Mr Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members for Nickel Belt and Algoma-Manitoulin, my colleague from Oak Ridges, and the member for Beaches-East York.

I did want to touch a little bit on the member for Nickel Belt's comments about the federal money. She's bang on. There is the money, and the Minister of Health cannot even categorically state, when we're talking about health care being the priority of this government, that that new federal money is even going to health care. Now, that's a shame.

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The member for Algoma-Manitoulin talked about the money going into long-term care. Well, that money has yet to flow and, according to what went on in estimates on October 5, the regulation with regard to the number of baths has not even been dealt with by cabinet at this point, so I think we're a little premature on that. But it's nice that the government does recognize that there are some things that can be improved in health care and there is a lot that can be done, and we encourage them to do that. But we don't think you have to break everybody's bank on an individual basis in order to do so.

This government has consistently said one thing about, "We will be judged on what we do in those two key areas of health care and education." The people have already rendered some judgment with regard to the implementation of this health care tax, and how regressive and punitive it is to certain members of our population. They will be judged, and I can tell you that the people of the province of Ontario are looking forward to the opportunity on October 4, 2007, when they will be passing judgment on this government. This health care tax will be a situation that they will wish they didn't have to deal with, but they will be dealing with it that day, I can assure you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. Let me begin by reinforcing the fact that, yes, the Liberals did know that there was going to be a deficit and, yes, they did know that that deficit was going to be extremely significant. So we play a bit of Pinocchio politics when we have the Liberals get up and say, "Oh my God, we have to bring in this new health tax because we have a deficit that we didn't know anything about and it's the only thing we can do to raise the kind of money we need to make good on the promises we made."

Now, I think it's worth, again, for the record, just repeating what some Liberals who would know had to say about the deficit before the election and before the 231 promises that were made. Let's start with Gerry Phillips, because you know that Gerry Phillips is a long-serving Liberal member. He is now in cabinet. He was the finance critic for the Liberal Party for many years, a well-respected finance critic, I might add.

Gerry Phillips was down in the estimates committee for the Ministry of Finance in June 2003 before the election was called. The committee that day was dealing with the estimates that had been tabled as a consequence of the budget that had been outlined by the previous Conservative government. Mr Phillips was in his rotation, asking questions of Madam Ecker, asking about the fiscal situation and what appeared in the estimates, and Gerry Phillips was really clear. He said, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, minister," that is, Madam Ecker, "I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk."

Well, it was, and he knew that and, as a consequence of being the finance critic, the Liberal Party knew it too. And it was very clear, because of course this was on Hansard. It might have been in room 151, so it might have even been televised, but it certainly was captured on Hansard. And it was very clear that the finance critic for the Liberal Party was putting forward his concerns at that time, before the election, that there was going to be a \$5-billion deficit.

Now, he was followed up on that by another of his colleagues, a long-serving Liberal member, someone else who is now in cabinet in this House, and that is Mr Monte Kwinter. Mr Kwinter said to the Canadian Press on August 13, 2003, and I will quote: "Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter (York Centre) accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion." There's another long-standing Liberal member, who is now in cabinet, who was very public about his concern that there was going to be a very significant deficit when all the dust settled. He was, of course, quoted, and any number of us saw that particular quote, which is why I use it here today.

Mr Phillips also talked about some of that deficit that was piling up off-book. I heard some other references about that today as well, that not only do we have the deficit that came from the budget itself, but we also have all of this other deficit that has flowed from all of this being off-book.

Gerry Phillips said on June 7, 2002, the following: "Billions of dollars of off-book debt are piling up on school boards, hospitals, universities, colleges and nursing home owners. The province has guaranteed to pay the principal and interest, but there is at least \$5 billion of fairly new debt that does not show up on the province's books." So there again, long before the election, Mr Phillips, the Liberal finance critic, was making comments first about the deficit that he was dealing with as a result of Madam Ecker's budget, but even before that, the debt that was piling up through hospitals, schools and other public institutions. So it was, frankly, very well known to the Liberals before the election that the province was staring a \$5-billion problem in the face. That's what we were looking at, but it didn't stop them during the election campaign from making about 231 promises to the people of Ontario.

It's really difficult now to listen to the Liberal backbenchers say, "We had no choice. We had to bring for-

ward this premium because we didn't realize the magnitude of the deficit. We were taken by surprise." Nobody was taken by surprise, least of whom one Mr Phillips, who was the Liberal finance critic and was quite vocal about the magnitude of the problem before the election ever occurred. So, please, let's not pretend that this has anything to do with dealing with a deficit that you didn't know anything about. It may have everything to do with trying to finance your promises, but you certainly knew about the debt, and if you didn't think you could deal with that, you shouldn't have been making those kinds of promises with those kinds of price tags during the election campaign.

The second person I want to quote is Dalton McGuinty, because what we are dealing with today is a budget measure that will bring in a new tax. Speaker, you will recall that during the election campaign, Dalton McGuinty did a press conference with the taxpayers' federation here in Ontario. During that time, he was asked to—and indeed he did—sign the taxpayers' pledge, which was essentially to say that if elected, he would not raise taxes. So there he was in the middle of the election campaign with the taxpayers' federation signing the pledge saying he wasn't going to bring in any new taxes, and yet here we are today, as we deal with this bill, seeing the government do exactly that. That is very clearly a broken promise, one that I think will have some very serious repercussions for this government for a long time to come. If he knew what the magnitude of the deficit was and he still went out and made 231 promises, how could he ever imagine that he wouldn't have to raise taxes to pay for those promises? Of course he was going to have to raise taxes to pay for those promises, in light of a \$5-billion deficit. Of course he was going to have to. So what was he doing signing that pledge?

I'd have to argue that he was trying to buy votes, and it seemed to work very well. But here we are, a year later, dealing with a tax measure that is probably the single biggest tax increase the province has ever seen in one fell swoop. So much for that election promise.

But what else did he say? He also had lots to say about a health premium before the election, and he had a lot to say about this when this was a focal point during the Tory leadership campaign—not the most recent one, but the one before—to replace Mike Harris. This is January 25, 2002, on Canada NewsWire. Here's what it says:

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"Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families," says leader Dalton McGuinty. "Tory leadership candidates Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell may want to raise taxes by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not," McGuinty said today. "Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care. That's the Tory plan. It's certainly not the Liberal plan."

Well, tell it to the people who have just seen their chiropractic care being cut or their eye care or physiotherapy care.

But, wait, there's more: "If Eves were Premier, you'd pay at least three times"—catch this—"with your taxes, with your premiums, and if you have the cash, out of your own pocket to get premium service."

Well, what do you think we have now under the Liberal scheme? You pay once for health care through your taxes. You pay again for health care through this new tax, and if you can afford it out of your pocket, you might be able to pay for the chiropractic care that this government cut off or the eye exams this government is reducing or the physiotherapy services that this government has cut off too. Isn't that interesting?

Here's his last quote: "Instead of looking for ways to make Ontarians pay more"—here we are dealing with a bill that's going to make Ontarians pay \$2.4 billion more in a health tax—"we must look for better ways to invest the precious dollars Ontarians already gave us."

Well, what happened to Dalton McGuinty since January 25, 2002? Here is the Liberal leader who said he wouldn't bring in a premium of \$1,000 per family. Guess what? This premium sure does mean \$1,000 per family, if you've got two income earners in that family. In fact, in some cases it's going to mean \$1,200 per family, not just \$1,000. Yes, you're going to pay three times under the Liberals, because you pay for health care through your general taxes, you're paying for health care again with this new premium and now you get the pleasure of paying for those services that this government has delisted or has privatized as a result of its budget, namely, chiropractic services, eye exams and physiotherapy services. Is Dalton McGuinty looking for better ways to use the money that Ontarians already give him for health care? No. Through this measure, the government's going to bring in an additional \$2.4 billion, a huge hit on modest- and middle-income families.

So, clearly, that was then and this is now, and I don't see much of a difference. In fact, I don't see any difference at all between what Mr McGuinty is now doing and what was proposed in January 2002 by Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell, no difference at all.

Now, I heard the member from Oakville say that it was time this afternoon to really tell people how this is going to work, and he's right. So let's just do that. I said earlier that this new tax is highly regressive. It really overwhelmingly affects modest- and middle-income families, in terms of how it is set up. Let me give you an example. This new tax means that someone who is making \$30,000 a year—let's say a single mom who is making \$30,000 a year—as a result of this new tax, is now going to pay 24% more in income tax, while someone else who is making \$200,000 is only going to pay 3% more. Where, I ask you, is the fairness in that?

Let's look at it from the perspective of what those high-income earners were already getting. It's clear that a person who is receiving \$200,000 in income and is only going to pay 3% more as a tax under this particular scheme is already doing very well, thank you very much.

Let's give a different figure: \$100,000. An individual in Ontario with an income of \$100,000 got a 35% tax cut

from the former Conservative government, and then that same individual got an 18% tax cut from the federal Liberals. That's a combined tax gift of \$9,600. An individual with an income of \$125,000 got tax cuts of 30% from the Conservatives and 16% from the federal Liberals, a combined tax gift of \$11,500. Meanwhile, a couple who are making \$49,000 each are going to pay \$1,200 in the new health tax, while someone with an income of \$125,000 pays only \$900. That is how this tax is structured, and those are the kinds of costs that people pay.

What is clear from the structure is that modest- and middle-income families get whacked the most. They, by and large, are paying the overwhelming majority of this new tax, not the people who can afford it the most, not the people who got the biggest benefit under the former government's tax giveaways and the federal Liberal tax giveaways. No, the people who are paying the most and raising the most money for this new tax are, by and large, modest- and middle-income Ontarians, and there is nothing fair about that.

When the government brought this new tax in, in order to try to make it more palatable for average Ontarians, the Liberal Party ran a series of radio ads. Premier McGuinty said the following in the radio ads: "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Well, do you know what? What is just not true. If you go to page 44 of the Liberal budget, you will very clearly see that in fact this year that money is going to pay for sewer pipes and advertising. If you look on page 44 of the budget, you will see there is more money coming in from the new health tax than is going out in the Ministry of Health in all their line items. About \$200 million more is coming in this year that is not accounted for under the Ministry of Health estimates and all their programs.

What is very clear is that the government is in fact paying for other services with the excess money that's coming in from the health tax. Page 44 makes it clear: About \$113 million dollars from the so-called health tax is going to pay for watershed and waste-water projects under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, and another \$3 million is going to promote exercise under the tourism and recreation ministry. The Premier said very clearly that every penny would go to health care. I don't think that most average Ontarians would consider sewer pipes as health care. I don't think that most average Ontarians would consider ads at the Ministry of Tourism to be health care, and frankly they are not.

What's interesting is what's going to happen next year. It is awfully clear that next year even more money is going to come in through the health care premium than is actually allocated under the Ministry of Health. If you go to page 12 of the budget for fiscal year 2005-06, it is clear that the government will take in \$1.6 billion more in dedicated health taxes and revenue from the federal

government but will only invest \$600 million more in the Ministry of Health estimates. So next year you have \$1 billion of additional revenue, and I guess it will be interesting to see what will be the health items that the government will spend that money on. Perhaps it will be roads that ambulances use to get to hospitals. I don't know; the government is going to have to be awfully creative. But it's clear that this year \$200 million more comes in, which is why it's being spent on things that are not truly health-related, and next year it will be even more interesting to see what the government does with the extra revenue that comes in, \$1 billion dollars in that case.

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Do you know what's also interesting? In the same budget where we really whack modest- and middle-income Ontarians, there is a provision for a capital tax break for the banks that will mean a loss of \$1 billion to the treasury at the end of 10 years. So imagine, in the same budget with a regressive health tax, we also have a help measure that will result in the banks essentially paying the treasury \$1 billion less at the end of 10 years. That's \$1 billion that could go to health and education, and I'll tell you, that's \$1 billion that the banks could well afford and should be paying.

A final point on the radio ad: In the radio ad, Mr McGuinty said that the new health care premium was going to pay for meningitis vaccines for children. I confirmed in estimates two weeks ago that every penny of the new vaccination program is federal money. Every single penny of the new vaccination program for the next three years is federal money. There is not one red cent of new premium money in that. You can go to the Hansard from the estimates committee to see that that is just the case. So again, some of what was said was just a little not correct.

It is clear that the government could have made other choices. They knew there was going to be a problem—they had made the promises—and there were some other things that could have been done. I regret that the government didn't look at some of those other choices. What is clear to me is that the money that is coming in overwhelmingly comes in on the backs of modest- and middle-income families, those same families that are paying more on their hydro bills, because this government changed the rate cap—this government has not given a 10%, and another 10% reduction on hydro rates—more on their auto insurance premiums and probably a whole whack more in new fees and services that are yet to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The question I still haven't got an answer to from my friend from Nickel Belt, or any of the NDP members, is, if they are so concerned about the fact that there aren't enough tax dollars to help pay for education, to help pay for health care, why did her party vote along with the Conservatives—I know why the Conservatives did—against our government Bill 2? Do you remember Bill 2? That

was the rollback of the corporate tax cuts and the tax cuts to the wealthiest Ontarians, worth \$2.3 billion. Corporate tax cuts were supposed to go ahead for the wealthiest Ontarians—\$2.3 billion. I know why the Conservatives voted against our rolling that back. They thought that was a good part of their platform. But here is the NDP, that wants to suck and blow at the same time, and when it came to putting their money where their mouth is, to walk the walk, do you know what they did? They, along with the member for Nickel Belt—she has to explain this to us—voted not to roll back the corporate tax cut of \$2.3 billion that we have put into education, health care and the environment. They did not think that was a good idea. They wanted to keep that corporate tax cut in the pockets of the big corporations, the banks she just slammed. Yet she voted to give them that corporate tax cut.

She has the gall to stand up in this House and say that the banks shouldn't have been given some break. She voted to give the banks a break of \$2.3 billion. I encourage her to stand up in this House and explain that rationale to the people watching and to the members in this House.

Mr Yakabuski: I'm pleased to comment on the presentation by the member for Nickel Belt. It was interesting to listen to her. It was almost humorous to listen to what Dalton McGuinty said in 2002, and to listen to what we have been saying today about what this government is doing: Families are already paying for health care with their taxes—pay more for health care, pay twice for health care but get less health care. That's exactly what this government is doing. And this is what Dalton McGuinty, in 2002, so vociferously spoke against: a speculation that there may be some kind of a premium tax. And then of course this year, after the implementation of that tax, the Liberal Party takes out a radio ad, and there you hear Dalton McGuinty saying, "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health care premium will go to health care." We find out very shortly after that that simply isn't the truth, simply wasn't the case.

The saddest commentary of all—and this is what really hits the people of the province of Ontario—is they have already come to the conclusion that they can't believe a single word this government tells them. On key issues like health care, a pillar of our society, they know that this government cannot be trusted. The people have lost faith, and that is a sad commentary on democracy. It is a disservice to all the fine men and women who have served in this House previously and to all the people who have built this province that a government, in the eyes of the people of Ontario, simply cannot be trusted on anything it says.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Prue: I listened with great interest to my colleague from Nickel Belt. She had a great many things to say. Impeccable research. She had done a lot of work and the reasoning was sound.

After hearing that, I had to listen to the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and his diatribe, his political diatribe

of complete nonsense and puffery about something that had nothing to do with this bill at all. With the greatest of respect, if you want to know why the members of our party did not vote for Bill 2, it is because you put nine different acts in the bill and you taunted us to vote against all of it or to support all of it. We didn't support all of it and we voted no. I'm proud to say that we voted no, because if you want to do that kind of political puffery and nonsense in this House, you can expect not to get the kind of support. If you want a bill passed, you should put the bill forward, not nine bills at once. And if you want to act decently and honestly, I think the member from Eglinton-Lawrence knows a whole lot better than what he's doing here today.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: If the member from Eglinton-Lawrence wants to tell the people in this House, wants to tell the people who are watching that he has all the answers, then let him stand up and actually make a speech. Let him stand up and actually defend what he is trying to do in this particular bill that is before this House. If he wants to talk about something that happened a year ago that was all manipulated and that he helped to manipulate, then stand up and talk about your manipulation and how you're not even addressing the issue before us today.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: And if he wants to continue to speak while he's not there, Mr Speaker, I would suggest that you're allowing him a pretty good job to do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I'll certainly be the judge of that.

The member for Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to speak on Bill 106, a bill to implement the budget measures. This bill includes the implementation of the health premiums. Forty-three per cent of all Ontarians filing taxes will not have to pay premiums. Forty-eight per cent of seniors will not be paying premiums. We are fortunate in this country, compared to our friends to the south where over 40 million people do not have that security of health care. Health care south of the border can be catastrophic for families.

Revenues in this province were left well below expenses, and the only Tory I have heard acknowledge that, that the Tories had left the \$6-billion debt, was the new leader. Everyone else denied it.

So we have embarked on a program where we are shortening waiting times, expanding primary and community-based care, increasing the number of doctors and nurses, delivering results in a more cost-effective manner and ensuring that the system has the resources it needs.

I was pleased to be in my own community of Fallingbrook 10 days ago when a new MRI arrived there. We had a new MRI that opened service at the Queensway Carleton Hospital about a month ago. MRIs in the Ottawa area, the waiting times were so bad—and I believe a minister from Nepean-Carleton was there during that period—the number of MRIs was less than half per capita than in Toronto. That was under another

regime. We have two new MRIs now. Ottawa is up to the same level as the rest of the province. I'm very pleased with that.

I'm pleased that we've had to enact these tough budget measures, which are going to reward us with better health care in the years ahead.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: I want to reply to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. It's not often that I would support an omnibus bill. I usually find with them, after 17 years in this House, that there are pieces of legislation or bills in them that you don't want to support.

The case in point in Bill 2 had to do with the clawing back of funds that already had been granted by a previous government to parents who were sending their children to private schools. I don't support private schools, I never have, and this party has a long tradition of never supporting private schools. But the former government actually did put money out the door and into the hands of those families. And you, through Bill 2, forced them to pay it back. I thought that was unfair. I thought it would have made sense to cancel the tax and never pay out that enhancement to those families again. I thought it was grossly unfair to go back to those families, some of which have a modest income, who'd already paid the tuition fees, and demand that that be clawed back. If faced with a vote again, I would do that again, because I thought that was wrong. That was the reason I voted against that budget bill that also included the change in the tax rollback.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. I feel a little left out of the debate. The remarks should be through the Chair.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, it would be right if you listened.

Ms Martel: My finance critic at the time made it very clear that we were voting against the bill because of that clawback from those families that had already been given a benefit by a previous government. You wanted to continue to do that to those families. We thought that was wrong.

I also remember that my colleague suggested at the time that if you withdrew that particular clause, the retroactivity of clawing back, we would be supporting that bill. But your government did not want to do that. So again, I've never supported private schools but I didn't think what you did to families retroactively was very fair at all, and I continue to feel that way.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

First of all, I think it's important that I get on the record that on July 15, 2004, 2,000 millilitres fell on the communities of the city of Peterborough, the townships of Otonabee-South Monaghan, Douro-Dummer and Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield. That created a serious

flooding situation in the city of Peterborough and surrounding municipalities. I want to thank many members from all sides of the House who took the opportunity to contact me to find out what the situation was truly like in our community during those days.

I particularly want to thank the Premier of the province of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, who changed his schedule to be in Peterborough on Friday, July 16, to take a tour of all those areas that were devastated by the flood. Indeed, many ministers from this government came to Peterborough. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services came to the city to really get a first-hand view of the situation we were faced with during those days.

I want to compare the response. Twice in two years the Peterborough area got hit by the 100-year storm. In 2002, when it hit, we waited eight to nine months to get a response from the provincial government during that time. During this particular situation, this past July, our government was there immediately. We didn't sit around to plan, we didn't sit around to analyze; we were there right away to assist the citizens of Peterborough and those surrounding municipalities that indeed lost everything. I can speak for my own neighbours on Maniece Avenue, where some had six feet of water in their basements, and indeed they lost the family albums of kids growing up, playing hockey, and lost their wedding albums, things that are irreplaceable. Now, with the support of this government, we are well on the road to recovery in Peterborough.

I want to take an opportunity to speak about Bill 106 and the budget measures. We heard a lot about the risk that was in the budget. We know that our member, Mr Phillips, the then Liberal Party finance critic, indeed was pressing the then Minister of Finance, Minister Ecker. But every time we raised the issue about whether there were some risks in their budget, Madam Ecker replied that indeed that was not true, that the budget was balanced.

When we developed our platform documents leading into the election of last October, we assumed there was going to be a \$2-billion deficit. In fact, we've had notable economists actually certify that with a \$2-billion deficit we would be able to implement the major components of our platform.

What happened was that when we got there we had Erik Peters, a very distinguished former Provincial Auditor, do an in-depth analysis of the state of Ontario's books. It really upset me to hear members from the official opposition questioning the integrity of the former auditor, Erik Peters, when he provided us with the information that clearly indicated we were headed for a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Just to look at some of the highlights, I know that the health care premium was a bit of a controversy, but I

spoke to a lot of groups in my riding and explained to them exactly what we're doing with those dollars: 8,000 more full-time nurses for Ontario, increased home care—as a matter of fact, in my riding of Peterborough, \$1.2 million went to the CCAC for home care.

I'm in the process now of getting a report from our local manager of the CCAC, who tells me that the waiting list that existed under that government when they were in power, that group when they were in power, has now vanished because we've deployed those new resources into community care. I said quite publicly that we can place the money that's been generated by the health care premium or tax into increased services that are in our community, and people are prepared to accept that.

The other great thing I want to talk about is public health. When I was a former municipal politician, we were downloaded when the Honourable Al Leach was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in the first Harris government. They brought forward that omnibus bill that dumped a whole smorgasbord of responsibilities on to municipalities in Ontario. It's great to see that this government has finally realized that we have to lift some of those responsibilities, and one of them is going to be the area of public health care.

I could go on and on, but I want to give some time to my good friend the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): One of the crucial aspects of this bill, probably, is that it is all about accountability and about what the public really wants to know about this health care premium. In the explanatory note it states very clearly: "The new section 29.1 of the act specifies that the public accounts for each fiscal year shall include information about the use of the revenue from the Ontario health premium. The new section 29.2 provides for a review of the Ontario health premium by a committee of the assembly."

What does that mean? We are going to account for every penny of the health premium, that it goes into health care. Basically that is what the public wants. They are tired of governments that take revenues that then go into a black hole. The reason we did it this way is so that the money could be directed specifically to health care because that is something we said we would rebuild.

Moral decision-making is about making decisions based on the information you have at the time you're making the decision. We had no choice, in spite of the rhetoric that we hear. On the other hand, we have put into place a check and balance so that the money that is being collected is going to be directed where the public expects it to be.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, the House is adjourned. We will resume at 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 18 October 2004

Lundi 18 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Duncan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes Mr Duncan.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with Ms Donna Cansfield, my parliamentary assistant and the member for Etobicoke Centre. I'm glad that Ms Cansfield will be speaking to this important legislation at second reading, as she was an integral member of the standing committee on social policy and heard presentations here at Queen's Park and in communities across Ontario on Bill 100.

What a pleasant change we've seen in governing in this province when a government actually sends bills out across the province for hearings, welcomes delegations, welcomes debate, welcomes input. That input was so significant that we brought forward a number of amendments resultant from the thoughtful presentations of the many delegations that spoke in favour of this bill.

Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, proposes a reorganization of Ontario's electricity system to more effectively address the critical need for new supply, increased conservation and price stability for consumers across Ontario.

Make no mistake about it: We are taking significant, concrete action to put the energy sector back on a solid footing after years of mismanagement and political interference by previous governments.

It is this sector which represents 3.1% of Ontario's gross domestic product. The potential economic impact

of insufficient power is significant, as we all saw during the August 2003 blackout.

Ontario needs to refurbish, replace or conserve 25,000 megawatts of generating capacity by the year 2020 to meet growing demand, while replacing its polluting coal-fired generating plants. That represents 80% of Ontario's current generating capacity and would require an investment of somewhere between \$25 billion and \$40 billion. Previous governments failed to act prudently, failed to act responsibly and sometimes just failed to act.

To tackle these challenges, Bill 100 proposes the creation of a new Ontario Power Authority that would ensure an adequate long-term supply of electricity, a mandate that no existing institution in the sector carries.

Imagine the surprise that those of us on the government side found when we formed the government and discovered there was no body within government that was mandated to ensure an adequate supply of electricity going into the future. The thought that such a vital commodity would be left unattended by the previous government, would leave it to a wholesale spot market that they in fact undid themselves, was just—it's mind-numbing when you think about it and the consequences of it.

In this bill, we have created a new conservation bureau, led by the province's first chief energy conservation officer. A megawatt, a kilowatt of electricity saved is every bit as good as a megawatt or kilowatt built.

The New Democrats, when they were in power, cancelled all of Ontario's conservation programs—every one of them. Of course, the Conservatives did nothing on the conservation front.

1850

There are provisions that the Ministry of Energy continue to set targets for conservation, renewable energy and the overall supply mix of electricity in the province. For the first time in history, we have out there right now requests for proposals for renewable energy that will generate 300 megawatts of new, renewable electricity in Ontario, something that no previous government has done. We have redefined the role played by the Independent Electricity Market Operator and redefined its name as the Independent Electricity System Operator. Some of the current responsibilities of the IMO would be moved to the Ontario Energy Board and the proposed Ontario Power Authority. We have provided incentives for more private sector investment in new generation to help meet growing demand. Finally, regulated prices in parts of the electricity sector would be adjusted and

approved periodically by the Ontario Energy Board to ensure price stability for consumers. Our plan includes a strong public leadership role, clear accountabilities and a coordinated planning approach to address the growing gap between electricity supply and demand in order to keep the lights on now and for our children and grandchildren.

The new Ontario Power Authority would be established to ensure long-term adequacy in Ontario. The authority would: assess adequacy and reliability of electricity resources; forecast future demand and the potential for conservation and renewable energy; prepare an integrated system plan for generation, transmission and conservation; procure new supply, transmission and demand management; either by competition or by contract, when necessary; assist the government and achieve its goals for alternative and renewable energy; and establish a conservation bureau, headed by a chief energy conservation officer, to provide leadership in planning and coordination of electricity conservation and demand management. The OPA would also be self-financing, with fees approved by the Ontario Energy Board.

The Independent Electricity Market Operator would be renamed the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, and continue to operate the wholesale market and be responsible for the operation and reliability of Ontario's power system. Responsibility for the market surveillance panel would be transferred from the IMO to the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board would have the authority to review and approve amendments to market rules for the IESO-administered markets.

Under our plan, the government would continue to set targets for conservation and renewable energy and set guidelines for diversity of supply. The McGuinty government has already stated its medium-term goals: 5% of Ontario's capacity should come from new, renewable sources by 2007, 10% by 2010, and electricity demand should be reduced by 5% by 2007 through conservation. The Ontario Power Authority would be charged with achieving the targets set by the government.

The Ontario Energy Board would approve an annual rate plan for residential and other low-volume consumers based on regulated, contract and expected market prices, and guarantee public input and fairness. Consumers and small businesses that do not wish to participate in the regulated rate plan could purchase their electricity from energy retailers. Electricity costs for medium and large businesses would reflect a combination of regulated and competitive market prices for electricity. These businesses could also opt to use energy retailers or financial hedging instruments to manage energy costs.

Bill 100 was sent to committee after first reading. I, my staff, and the Ministry of Energy have held hundreds of meetings and consultations on the important changes we're making to this vital sector. Furthermore, the standing committee on social policy received 293 written and oral presentations on the bill.

For a moment, I want to mention the importance of public input and consultation by reflecting on some comments made by Ms Patricia MacKay during the public hearings. She stated: "Thank you for having these hearings so that citizens can come and say what they have to say. I am here as just exactly that: a concerned citizen, perhaps as much as anything as a grandmother who feels that we all have a responsibility for the future."

I'm proud of the fact that after so many years of jamming bills through this Legislature and a lack of public input on important government legislation, the McGuinty government is committed to listening to the public and to having open, transparent and honest dialogue with the people of Ontario. This is an important change that's central to our democracy. The Ernie Eves government didn't send any bills to committee in its last year, not for travelling committee.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Oh, get real.

Hon Mr Duncan: It's a shame, and that is real. They had their budget at an auto parts plant, and didn't allow legislative input. I think everybody remembers that, remembers it very well. Members were sitting here in this chamber while the members of the government were out at that automotive plant listening to a budget that should have been presented here and, well, they know where they're sitting now and where we're sitting now.

Mr Dunlop: You won the election. Why don't you start governing?

Hon Mr Duncan: And we are governing. We're governing. They'll vote against this bill. Even though energy supply has increased, the reserve is up to—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Duncan: The member opposite forgets the 1,000 megawatts that have come on stream. He forgets, in his haze—

The Acting Speaker: Minister, House leader. The member from Simcoe North and the Minister of Agriculture, I heard the discourse. Can you please stop it? Minister, continue.

Hon Mr Duncan: The member's in some kind of haze. I don't know what induced it, but in any event I'll attempt to carry on.

One thousand new megawatts have come on stream. Another 2,500 have been called for. Three hundred megawatts renewable for the first time in the history of this province, something—

Mr Dunlop: We put that all in place and now you're trying to take credit for it.

Hon Mr Duncan: You didn't even touch the RFP; that's ours. Something is causing his behaviour to be a little bit absurd over there. I don't know what's causing it, but he really isn't making sense.

Mr Dunlop: You'll hear our comments later.

Hon Mr Duncan: No, I'm not going to stay. We had public hearings, something you didn't want to do. This government's changed the way you did business. We fixed electricity markets and we're going to make them work, something you didn't do.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Duncan: That haze over there has just set in. It's a fog of deniability, it's a fog of not accepting reality, a failure, a failed government, a failed member, a failed agenda, one that we're correcting.

As I said, Bill 100 was sent to committee after first reading. I, my staff and the Ministry of Energy have held hundreds of meetings and consultations. For a moment I want to mention the importance of public input and consultation. I'm proud of the fact that after so many years of jamming bills through this Legislature and a lack of public input on government legislation—I remember that bill, the budget, the last budget of the last government at Magna. No public hearings. What a shame. Seventeen bills, and do you know what? Not one of them was passed without time allocation. Not one of them. What a shame. And that's why you're over there and we're over here.

Among those stakeholders were environmental and consumer groups who made presentations regarding Bill 100. The Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance stated on August 12 that they are very "supportive of Bill 100 and views it is an excellent step toward building a conservation culture in Ontario." On August 9, the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association said, "Bill 100 represents a good start, certainly from the perspective of renewables.... We believe the inclusion of renewables as a policy directive in Bill 100 is very laudable, and we are very supportive of that."

Some other valuable input we received was from the Electricity Distributors' Association: "Bill 100 is a step forward in the continuing reform of Ontario's electricity system," said EDA chair Ken Quesnelle. "The province's electricity distributors are encouraged that a number of significant issues are being addressed in the proposed legislation," issues that were ignored by the Harris-Eves government, simply not dealt with. Bill 100 reflects many of the objectives long held by the EDA, including electricity prices that reflect the true cost of power, while ensuring stable rates for residential customers.

We have spoken to people from all across this great province and, although I haven't time to mention all of their presentations here today, I would like to bring some additional comments to the attention of the members opposite, many of whom continue to misunderstand the government's proposed changes to the sector. For instance, a group calling itself The Case for Public Power presented to the committee on August 24, and they said:

"We applaud the continuance of public power in Ontario.... We believe Ontario is making the right choice for the future to keep our heritage electricity assets in public hands.

"We also applaud the return to central strategic planning....

"We also strongly support the concept of establishing an authority to take control of the situation—not a return to the old Ontario Hydro but rather a powerful planner and implementer to encourage significant private sector involvement, where appropriate, in all phases of both demand and supply options for the future.

"Finally, we support the government's stated determination to keep a transparent, arm's-length relationship between future governments and the electricity sector."

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In addition to the changes proposed in Bill 100, we also proposed a number of amendments subsequent to the public hearings. We have added the goals of safety and sustainability to the overall purposes of the act, a change which reflects the input we received from many groups.

Concerns were also raised about how the system will operate, how the Ontario Power Authority, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board will all fit together. So we introduced an amendment to the bill. While each body will consult stakeholders independently, we've tabled an amendment to create a special advisory committee to the minister to advise on how the system is working together so we can make necessary adjustments as we move forward.

I'm pleased to be able to kick off second reading debate on this bill and to share this time with my colleagues. I urge the members of this Legislature to support this bill so that we can continue to move forward and make the changes that will ensure we are building a bright and more prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act. One of the best things that happened was getting an opportunity to go out during the travels with Bill 100 and talk to the people of Ontario about how they felt, whether they came from a very large portion of the sector or whether they were individuals. We had one lady who wanted to transform her farm into wind power, and how could she go about doing it, because she believed in green energy.

We had the major power producers—and actually, I could quote from them, David Butters. They see this energy plan as a positive step and are pleased that the government has committed to ensuring adequate supply, and are doing so in a pragmatic, economic way. It's clear that they intend to improve the stability of the sector, create a conducive climate for business and consult with effective stakeholders on the detailed arrangements, of which there are many.

We had, time after time, people who came in support of the bill because they felt it was time for a new way of doing business in Ontario, and that's exactly what Bill 100 does. It's a new way of doing business. It's a different policy direction than what was there previously, and we're going to move forward in this sector with the hybrid model.

In essence, Bill 100 addresses the critical gap; it integrates resource planning; it deals with contracting capability and the utilities' role in conservation; it's the support for renewables; and it has regulatory certainty and cost-based pricing. Those are the ingredients in the bill that will help us produce the framework that we need to move forward in this sector. That's exactly what Bill 100 is—a framework—and then the regulations will

follow. Some of them are already posted on the Web for public scrutiny.

We had a lot of input from stakeholders. The minister and I estimate that, from January to today, between us we've probably met with about 600 interested individuals and companies about how we can improve the electricity sector for the economy in this province.

What I'd like to speak about in particular is the local distribution role in conservation and what a difference it will make as we move forward in this province dealing with this restructuring. For the last number of years, the local distribution companies have had their rates frozen, and they weren't able to get their profit back. The minister, if you recall, in a previous bill indicated that they could, in fact, get their third tranche back if they put one year's profit into demand-side management or into conservation practices, and they had a period of three years in which to do that.

As well, we put a conservation bureau in place that, with the chief conservation officer, will help to enable those local distribution companies to engage in province-wide initiatives if they choose, or in initiatives that suit their community, because we recognize that communities are different. You'll find that there is a difference between northern Ontario, Windsor, Ottawa or even downtown Toronto. There are differences between Etobicoke and Scarborough. So it was really important that there be some flexibility for the local distribution companies as they develop those local conservation initiatives for their communities.

And have we had some wonderful ideas come forward. It has been exciting to listen to the ideas that have been sitting on a shelf for a number of years, where people have come forward with new technology. We've had people in the office with technology from NASA. We had another gentleman who has a monitoring system. At this point, I'm not able to give you all of the details, but in essence it's a very large food chain. What they discovered was that they had a 20% savings because they had monitored the use and distribution of their electricity and discovered that they actually were energy hogs when they didn't need to be.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Forward-looking.

Mrs Cansfield: Absolutely. It's that kind of forward-looking thinking, thinking outside of the box, what it is we can do to help these individuals, whether they be small business or consumers themselves—that's where the local distribution company will play such a critical role.

I have beside me the member from Peterborough. I can tell you, that particular local distribution company has been so forward-thinking, possibly because they've had a serious incident, as you know, with the flooding in the community, but also because they have a chief officer of that utility who really thinks about what's in the best interests of his community: addressing low-volume users, whether they in fact can be addressed through the bill or through regulation; how he can put monitors or smart metering in; what it is that he can do. We even talked

about a unit that stores energy at peak times so that it can be used in off-peak times for these individuals.

This is the kind of innovativeness and entrepreneurial spirit that's actually out there now in Ontario. People are prepared and willing to come to the table to say, "What is it we can do to help you help others make this better for small businesses and people in Ontario?"

This is exactly what Bill 100 will do. It will give them that enabling, whether it's through the regulations or through the bill itself, to move forward and do the things they need to do to help those local communities. As someone said, it's just a brand new way of doing business in Ontario. It's a little overdue, and it's time that we all worked together.

The other thing that's really positive is, you can top up the programs with the federal initiatives that are out there. The local distribution company can use part of that third tranche in profit, they can top it up with EnerCan Resources to do industry audits, house audits, or look at pilots or provide information depending on what the local distribution company is.

Mr Leal: It's a new day in Ontario.

Mrs Cansfield: It's a wonderful opportunity. When you think about the things we can do—we have a huge debt. Where it came from—we've got it. We've got to deal with it. We also have part of that debt that came because we actually paid for electricity that wasn't at its real cost. That time is over. People are going to start paying for what they use, and it's fascinating. People say to me, "Well, what is it that I could do that could make a difference? What difference would it make?"

We have approximately 4.5 million "units," they call them in Ontario. These are people's homes, apartments, houses. If every one of those units put in four compact fluorescents, we could shut down one coal-fired plant of 200 or 250 megawatts. That's what one person can do. That's the kind of difference we can make if we collectively work together.

There's a new initiative out there around LED lights. Sometimes you'll see them now in traffic lights, but certainly within Christmas lights. They are the same cost. They cost pennies compared to the dollars that it would cost you to put them on your Christmas tree. These are new and innovative programs that we hope the local distribution companies will pick up, and this bill certainly will enable them to do that as well.

The other thing that is exciting is that we're going to look at province-wide initiatives. How do we work with our children? We know recycling has worked for years because we taught our children the value of caring for Mother Earth. Electricity is no different. How do we work within the education system for that understanding about sustainability, where you have a balance? Whether it's among the economy, the society and the environment, it's a balance in that sustainable factor.

We're not alone in this. I know the province of Manitoba actually has a sustainability act they've put in place. Certainly the federal government has sustainability as part of their cultural thinking internally with their com-

mittees. Now it's time for us, and that's why you found the word "sustainability" in the bill, because it's time for us to look at our environment, our electricity, our society, our economy in a sustainable fashion—that the balance is kept in place.

We're going to look at your electricity charges as well. I'm pleased to tell you that there's a whole new way of getting your bill. Finally, it's time.

Mr Leal: It's about time.

Mrs Cansfield: It's about time.

Mr Leal: It was so confusing.

Mrs Cansfield: What we've been able to do is to put in place where you're going to have a clear bill that will determine the language and actually give you a glossary of terms so you understand exactly what it is that you're getting: What is a debt retirement charge and why do you have to pay it? What does it actually mean? It gives you a comparison on consumptions, and the local distribution company can actually put in a conservation tip, or the minister can as well.

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The other part of the bill that's actually very fascinating for someone like me is that we can project goals and conservation as part of the strategy of the government. So if we want an attainable goal of 10% or 15%, whatever it might be, then it's the responsibility of both the conservation bureau and the Ontario Power Authority, which will work with the conservation bureau, to make sure that that goal is achieved through initiatives. They have to report to the public on an annual basis—again, as part of the bill—so that it's open, transparent and accountable. In fact, if we do not achieve it, there's a mechanism whereby they can come back through to the government. These are positive things that we've put in place to make a difference in how we do business in Ontario.

One of the other important parts of the bill is the issue around securing new supply, and that's the Ontario Power Authority. Exactly how does that power authority work and what kind of a difference does it make, and why do we need a power authority at all? The reason simply is because we don't have a way of procuring our supply at this time. So it's not a crown agency.

It is a creditworthy entity, however. I think it's important to share with you that the Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd "views all of these proposed reforms as generally positive for the electricity sector relative to the framework within which this sector has operated since Bill 210 was introduced in ... 2002." That, in fact, says that they've given us an A-minus rating even though the power authority isn't up and going, because they see themselves that there is stability within the sector.

Some of the other issues that we had when people came forward and talked about the strength of the bill, and actually some of them you would find most interesting: We had Joe Comartin, who is the federal NDP member for Windsor-Tecumseh, who said, "I wanted to come forward today to discuss—strange as this may be, given that I'm from a different party—the parts of the

legislation that deal with conservation. It seems to me that the provision for the conservation bureau and the provision for a conservation officer as a significant player in OPA is a step forward."

I could go through and tell you about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Judith Andrew: "I want to say at the outset that" the federation "agrees in principle with the direction laid down by the government in Bill 100. We support the government's efforts to depoliticize this key issue" in Bill 100. "We appreciate that the government is following through on their commitment to provide small business with predictable and stable electricity prices."

The professional engineers in this province, along with the interior design folks, along with Hydro One and the ministry, have put together a small audit guide, separate from and different from what's available at EnerCan Canada, to help those small businesses deal with their bottom line, which, as you know, is a small percentage. We need to find ways to enable them to use their energy more wisely.

The best story, I think, was a company where they went into a very small business—he happened to be a baker—and the baker said, "I don't know what's wrong; my electricity bill is going through the ceiling." So one assumed, of course, it might be the ovens, if they were gas-fired. As it turned out, it was his freezer. He didn't know. This monitoring device enabled him to do a small audit in his business, and in fact, he saved a considerable amount of money. That piece of equipment wasn't available before. It's that entrepreneurial spirit that's out there that's going to create more jobs as people look at different ways to handle the demand-side management initiatives.

For the first time in Ontario's history, when we put out the RFP for 2,500 megawatts—sorry, the RFEI; it was a request for expressions of interest—we put it out with demand-side and supply having equal billing, and 60,000 megawatts of interest came in. That says that this bill stands with credibility. It indicates that people have a strong interest and that they know that this government is committed to moving forward on its commitments. In other words, it's walking its talk.

Mr Leal: A question of confidence.

Mrs Cansfield: It certainly is a question of confidence. I think you will find, as you go through the bill and that it's enabling, that you will end up with the same kind of comments we received from any number of individuals. I give you another example, from the Canadian Auto Workers: "Bill 100 possesses some important improvements for the generation and supply of electricity in this province. It is significant and important that the new electricity legislation proposes to reintroduce planning into the system. It is also important that the act gives a legislative mandate to promote conservation and the expansion of renewable energy. These are positive steps."

I could go on. There are any number of individuals—people who come from unions, people who come from large corporations, individuals who believe in green

energy—who are supportive of what this government is doing in Bill 100. It is a major step forward in doing business just a little bit differently in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased tonight to rise to make a few comments on Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act.

I listened to the minister speak and also to Mrs Cansfield, and one thing that came to my mind was credibility. I have a hard time believing the government when it comes to hydro. I have to go right back to the election of 2003. I sat at all-candidates' meetings and I saw the Premier on TV and I saw his brochures. If I'm not mistaken, what came to my mind was that the Premier agreed with the fact, as they voted in this House under the previous government, that they would leave the cap in place until the year 2006.

Guess what happened? By November 25, 2003, less than two months after the government won the election, they completely eliminated that. You lifted the cap and went from 4.3 to 4.7, and then, after 750 kilowatt hours, you went to 5.7. So I don't know what the citizens of Ontario are really expected to believe here.

Most of the things you've come out with in Bill 100 are things you've piggybacked on from our previous legislation; there's no question about that. Now you're trying stand here today, saying that nothing happened in conservation or anything else. Remember, we had the alternative fuels committee, and many members in this House sat on that committee. We based a lot of our future direction on its report, and you are as well.

When it comes to the minister talking about how wonderful things are today, the other thing I've got to bring to your attention in the House is that he's probably had the coolest summer in the last 30 years. We haven't really seen the impact of an amount of usage in this province. Let's go through a winter and another couple of summers, and we'll see how credible the minister's comments are.

Anyhow, he's put them in Hansard today. I'm glad he said what he did. We'll look forward to a lot of debate on this, and we'll see how many times there will be time allocation motions brought forward this fall by this government.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments, and I too would like to comment generally on the government's credibility. I remember, in the run-up to the election campaign and during the election campaign, one Dalton McGuinty saying that he believed Ontario's electricity system should be publicly owned and operated on a not-for-profit basis. When he was asked the specific question, "What about new generation?" his response was that new generation should be publicly owned and operated on a not-for-profit basis. Similarly, Mr McGuinty and the Liberals, when asked their view on the so-called hydro rate cap, said they were going to keep it in place until 2006. Then the election happened, and within days of the election happening, suddenly keeping the rate cap in

place until 2006 disappeared out the door. Then, when we got this legislation and had a chance to question the minister, we were told, in contradiction to Mr McGuinty's statements during the run-up to the election and during the election itself, that new generation was not going to be publicly owned. In fact, new generation is going to be privately owned and will operate on a profit-driven basis. What turns on that? Just the mere fact that if you compare publicly owned, not-for-profit hydroelectricity with privately owned, profit-driven electricity—the difference in rates—whether you look at North America or elsewhere in the world, privately owned costs 20% more, on average. For industry, small business and individual consumers, that means they will end up paying much more than they can afford for hydroelectricity.

I look forward to debating that change of position on the part of Liberal government before and after the election.

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Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this bill.

I had the pleasure to sit through one of the committee hearings in Orono. It was great to see the number of people, even within my riding of Northumberland, come in and get very engaged in the debate. Somehow this government has taken a leadership role not only to come out with policy but to bring it out to the public for input.

Let me tell you what some of the people on the street are saying in my riding, as we talk about electricity and the direction it's going, how great it is that we have a plan. I can also tell you some of the reaction I get when we compare our plan to previous governments' plans. I really believe that people were afraid to get up in the morning, because they didn't know what was going to happen that day with the direction hydro was taking. So it was refreshing: Even though rates had to go up somewhat, I believe the people of Ontario understand reality: that money doesn't grow on trees.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you how engaged people are out there. For the second year in a row, the municipality of Trent Hills, in my riding, had a renewable energy showcase, with participants from across the province with innovative ideas who are out there trying to help their fellow Ontarians and this government come up with new ways, specifically in renewable energy. I can tell you that I took part in the showcase in the last two days. I was delighted to see Donna Cansfield, PA to the minister, as part of a panel to make sure we understood the needs of Ontario. It was just phenomenal.

In conclusion, I'm delighted that our government—the McGuinty government—has taken the direction of conservation, new hydro sources, renewable, the whole broad band.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I want to assure the viewing public and those present tonight that I will be brief, if you can do that in an hour's time. There are more questions on this bill than answers, and there are few things that are more certain than that the price is going up.

I intend to challenge the minister on a number of his assertions here this evening and encourage the minister to work with us, because a lot of it is adopting our policy, which was interrupted by very unusual circumstances. But in a compliment on what they're doing, imitation is the best form of flattery.

There are faults with the bill; that is clear. One of them is a series—almost a litany—of broken promises. There is much more to be said on this. In the limited time I'm given, I will try to bring some clarity to Bill 100.

That being said, I intend to go through, for those viewing, every single amendment they rejected from both ourselves, as the opposition, and the NDP, which shows the bulldog approach of this government, the failure to listen to the over 150 delegations and to forge ahead with a flawed policy that will hurt the public. It will hurt those least able to respond to the issues of a commodity that leaves the most vulnerable, those people in their homes on respirators, on a fixed disability income—the price of gas and oil going up and now electricity going up. There's no relief in sight. The only thing I can see here is that the minister is well intended, but he isn't prepared to listen. And that's the unfortunate dilemma he's in. His commitment on coal, many experts are challenging. In fact, their own caucus is now in complete revolt. I'll be speaking later, and I expect those listening to tune in.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: I want to thank the members who responded to the bill. Let me say first of all to the former government: One thing we know that happened for sure is that prices went up under your policy and supply went down. That's why we're left with a mess. You went to a free market and then you capped it—a cap that cost \$1.8 billion. Your plan didn't work. It failed. You brought on no new generation, no new supply, did nothing on conservation and left the province, frankly, in a mess. And by the way, you were secretly giving out—you talk about transparency and accountability—millions of dollars in contracts to your friends through Ontario Hydro and OPG. We shed the light of transparency on that, and this is the next logical step.

To the leader of the third party: The leader of the third party likes to remind us that this party changes position on the cap, and he's right. And what I said is that we made a mistake. Now let me tell you what the leader of the third party's track record is on this issue. He voted against putting the cap on, and then he voted against taking it off. One position one day; another position the next day. Mr Hampton voted against the cap and then he voted against taking it off. Why? Because he'll say anything. He has no accountability, he has no chance of forming a government and he certainly doesn't want to talk about his record, the first government in Ontario to bring private electricity on-line in Ontario. That was Howie Hampton's government, the government that cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario; his government, the NDP, the government that cancelled the Conawapa project with Manitoba in 1990, which, if it were on-line today, would be providing 1,500 megawatts

of clean, renewable power. That's his record. He also talked about cost of power, or power for cost. He doesn't say what that cost is, because he has no idea. His plan would have put prices much higher than they'll ever be under a Liberal administration's plan.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure as the opposition energy critic and one who is generally quite interested in this topic, as I represent an area of the province, the riding of Durham, which includes Clarington, north Oshawa as well as the Scugog and Port Perry area. It's an area that has been serviced, very respectfully, for many years by those who have been involved in energy, right from the 1850s—so, when many of the decisions on local distribution were being made—and bringing lights and commerce to our community. I would be wrong not to mention Ross Strike, who was the first president of the eastern district of the Electricity Distributors Association, a very well-respected family in our community. A very lengthy and excellent reference of that piece has been written by our curator at the museum, Charles Taws, and others.

I would say that Bill 100 is in a long line of challenges to the electricity industry. I think one has to go back somewhat to the beginning to see how we got to where we are. If you want to look at the first commission that I felt drew me into this while on council, it was when they were looking at the plight or challenges of nuclear generation, nuclear fuel being the fuel source for nuclear energy. It was very controversial at the time, but there were decisions made in the 1970s and 1980s, many of those people from my riding of Durham. In fact, some of the people in my riding were Deputy Ministers of Energy. I can say I come from a riding where there's a lot of interest and knowledge, which are both past and current people involved in the sector, both at OPG, Ontario Power Generation, as well as the Electricity Distributors Association—and more currently, a life member, and very well respected, Pauline Storks, who has been involved in the Electricity Distributors Association for many years, and the list goes on; and the newest reorganization of the local municipal electricity associations, John Wiersma, who is not in the post any longer, as the first head of Veridian, one of the more innovative and imaginative local distribution organizations.

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But I want to stick to the fundamentals. Really, you have to look at this bill as outgrowth of the Macdonald commission report, which looked at the old Ontario Hydro. It's absolutely imperative that we start there, the old Ontario Hydro, as we then knew it, Sir Adam Beck's principle. One hundred years of electricity generation in the province, and distribution and transmission as well, were all basically under one monopoly, which was Ontario Hydro.

It worked very well, because Adam Beck's principle was power at cost, but what he really meant was it's an economic policy. That's where this whole thing is flawed. It was an economic policy which made a source of energy—electricity for manufacturing, for the petro-

chemical, mining and forestry industries—a safe, reliable, affordable resource for those industries. Those resource industries are very dependent on having competitively priced power, or it is jobs. So it's an economic tool of the first order.

Macdonald looked at electricity that had gone somewhat off the rails, a lot of it from interference by governments of all stripes, I might say. Donald Macdonald was Trudeau's finance minister, so it's not like he was some Conservative statesperson. But I think he had it right. When he looked at the amount of what he called the debt to equity or the amount of asset ratio they had, he and a number of other experts determined that they had unsupported debt, in which the assets don't support the repayment of debt. We all knew there was a problem. When he looked at it, he said they had stranded debt that wasn't supported by capital; it couldn't generate enough revenue to pay off the debt. That had to be dealt with. All of us, whether it's industry or homeowners or persons living in whatever accommodation, we all depend on electricity.

He recognized too what I'd call cross-subsidization among the sector. There's generation, which is the creation of the power through some fuel source. That's controversial in its own right. Then there's transmission, which is the high-voltage lines getting it to where the end use is. Then there's distribution, which is the local distribution companies that actually interface with the consumer, be they small business or agriculture or homeowners or large consumers.

He said that that structure needed to be addressed. We, in our time in government, did take a long, hard look at it. There were some problems changing that system and the culture within the system. That's all understandable, as you look at a system that's 100 years old where there have to be changes. But Bill 100 is somewhat down the road yet. I'm still preparing us to talk about, what are the next steps?

It was so controversial that some of the members who are now in government should roll back the Hansard and read the record when they were in opposition. That would include, of course, Howard Hampton. It would include perhaps Dwight Duncan and Jim Bradley, of course, and Sean Conway. Those are all people who are knowledgeable and informed. They called on the Harris-Eves government to freeze rates. They knew the dilemma that people on fixed incomes or small businesses were facing when rates were going up, because we opened the market at a time when there was short supply and growing demand.

What happened? Prices went up. We had points where supply adequacy wasn't there because of problems with nuclear and other generation forms. Water levels were down, hydroelectric power was down. Natural gas prices were going up, so many of the natural gas plants couldn't afford to run; it would be cheaper to import the power. There were all kinds of system constraints.

But one thing was very clear: It's an essential commodity that people need. You cannot live very com-

fortably for very long without electricity, as we found out a year ago August with the blackout in 2003.

The point I'm making here is that it isn't like most other commodities in the marketplace. For instance, if I'm purchasing cable television services or satellite television services, and I find the rates are too high or too expensive, I can stop having it. It's not life-threatening. It's not imminently going to change or make my life somewhat less safe.

We have a product here that's not like others. So we responded to the outrage when the market opened—short supply, the price went up—and myself and others pressured the leader at that time, Ernie Eves, and, I would say most of our members of caucus—certainly the opposition. If you check Hansard, almost every question period was riddled with, “What are you going to do to protect the consumer?”

I don't want to get out of sequence here, but if you checked the papers a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Energy, Dwight Duncan, said he couldn't care less about the consumers. He said, “I can't help them. They're on their own.” That's basically what he said.

It's unfortunate to look at a commodity that's not like any other commodity: cable television, or whether I have a new car or more services on my phone line. This is a commodity that persons on a respirator, persons in small business, are dependent on. You'll see in my remarks, in the limited time I have, that I intend to expose here tonight that he's simply not listening. It isn't the sort of commodity that can be restructured.

But that wasn't clear enough. They voted for us. The now Liberal government voted to freeze the rates. At least Howard Hampton has been consistent on this, consistently wrong, but nonetheless consistent. If you read Public Power, he voted against it—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: That's what I'm saying. He voted against it. At least he's consistent.

What I'm saying to you is that, technically, they voted to freeze the 4.3 cents and they committed during the election—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I'd like you to bring the minister to order. He's interrupting. And he's worried because the truth is being revealed here.

They voted, and during the election and in the red book promises—basically, the red book belongs in the blue box. That's where it belongs: the red book in the blue box. Recycle it, because you can't commit to anything that's in it.

To avoid just being trivial and attempting to be humorous: They promised in their election document, among other things, to maintain the rate freeze. We all know the rate is so sensitive that they promised it, and when they got elected, the very first thing they did in Bill 4 was to break the first promise.

I recall the first four or five bills in the manual. Bill 4 says, “An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing.” It's November

25, 2003. It's just about a year ago, and people need to be reminded. That's a real broken promise. It sounds kind of small at the beginning. The rate price for the general consumer, under 1,000 kilowatt hours a month, roughly, was about 4.3 cents. There were some problems as you went up to 2,500 kilowatt hours, and there were thresholds for different user groups, but for the household it meant 4.3 cents. Well, they basically moved it very quickly. Anybody over 750 kilowatt hours went up to 5.3 cents. That's about a 20% increase. Think about it: 20% without any notice, and a promise broken.

That's the start, where my anxiety level rises. If you notice that I'm becoming a bit animated, Mr Speaker, I'm sure you can understand the frustration. You can't deal with someone who won't tell you the truth.

Hon Mr Duncan: Watch your hand. Watch that finger.

Mr O'Toole: I can tell you that it's in frustration like that that the Minister of Energy, I'm still convinced—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: They're still not listening.

It wasn't long after, in fact it was in June 2004, when Bill 100 was introduced by Minister Dwight Duncan. Much of the bill has a strange familiarity because it was written, not by the minister or his hokey policy people, but primarily by the ministry people, who are knowledgeable civil servants trying to find the right balance on this very difficult policy area. Most of the viewers will find it's Snoozeville time. But, I'll tell you, when you start getting your bills and they're 25%, 30% or 40% higher, you won't be in snooze mode; you'll be calling your member, as well you should, because the price is going up. That's the one certainty that I can commit to you tonight. I've seen no relief in sight for the small business person, for the dairy farmer who's got to milk the cows twice a day. I can see no relief in sight for the small users. In fact, the minister said he can't care for them. He's more concerned about conservation. Yes, there's a place for conservation.

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On Bill 100 we did have very extensive hearings, and that was after first reading. As such, that means the minister is prepared to accept amendments. I think we had over 150 delegations, ranging from absolute experts in the industry to—the member from Peterborough, I think, Mr Leal, was Chair of that committee, if I'm not mistaken. He wasn't there sometimes because they had the flood in Peterborough. But that's understandable. He's taking care of his constituency first. I understand that.

The point is that the hearings were in the summer, so a lot of people are maybe not as engaged. I don't know if that was deliberate or not. I'll overlook that small oversight. But what I'm confident of here is that the bill is still substantively flawed, and I think the minister knows that. I think that after all this debate is completed—and I will agree with it—the minister will send it out for further hearings. That's the right thing. I'll be supportive of that particular initiative by the minister.

Who can criticize a minister who wants to consult, thereby admitting that they haven't got it right? But that's the admission that they haven't got it right.

In the limited time I have—there's only about 40 minutes left, which is not near enough time on a very important policy area like this. For those listening, it says, "The purpose of the bill is to restructure Ontario's electricity sector, promote the expansion of electricity supply and capacity, including supply and capacity from alternative and renewable energy sources, facilitate load management and electricity demand management, encourage electricity conservation and the efficient use of electricity, and regulate prices in parts of the electricity sector."

Some of that I agree with. Its overarching themes are pretty common to any good public policy, and I'm just going to mention a couple. I believe in conservation. I grew up on a farm and I knew that conservation and saving for a rainy day was a very important fundamental in life. On price, we need to be sensitive to price. The price is certainly part of that equation, no question about it. But there is a certain threshold there where you have to cook your food, you have to heat your home or we're going to starve to death in the dark. So there's a price there, where you're a price taker. Regardless of the price, you have to have some level of comfort. Now, what level is a debate, certainly, and I think that's one of the areas he has to consult more broadly on: the small price taker, the residential, the person living in an apartment, a rented facility where the heat and hydro are extra.

I think demand management encourages part of that conservation initiative with the large sector. If you look at all the 25,000 megawatts on any bad day that you might need, if you can conserve an electron, it's an electron you don't have to generate. So I fully endorse conservation, and there have to be initiatives to encourage conservation. It's like anything in conservation. I'd start with the most obvious advantages, the large consumers, incenting them to take a certain amount of demand under certain circumstances, when it's a very hot day, to shut their plant down and send their workers home, so that there's no economic loss for them. But they could stop you from building a \$5-billion or \$10-billion nuclear or other fossil fuel alternative. So any electron you can conserve is an electron you don't have to generate.

There are a lot of sections in this bill. Schedule A amends the Electricity Act and creates what I said when this bill was introduced: a whole level of bureaucracy. I would say that this is going to be the test of it all—and I have no problem with bureaucracy if it's needed and not duplicitous.

I look at the structure today that was set up under the Electricity Act, 1998, which certainly should have been looked at, re-examined, revisited and improved. I have no question about that. But I believe that the IMO, which was predicting the amount of usage and doing its forecast modelling, was doing quite a good job. I was very fortunate to have been engaged in that process a bit and

knew Dave Goulding and all the IMO people who were doing this forecasting. What they weren't mandated to do was go out and actually do the power purchase agreements, the contracting, and that became somewhat problematic. I think that as we needed new generation to come on stream, we needed somebody to manage that enterprise.

They've created a new organization, the Ontario Power Authority, and the Independent Electricity System Operator to—actually there's one new organization there that somebody's going to have to pay for. That pay-for part is the deal because, according to Bill 100, the cost of administrative procedures within the Ontario Power Authority is going to be on your bill. It'll be one of the new charges. You won't get any more electricity; you'll be paying for another level of bureaucracy, plus the IMO exists under another name, plus the energy board, plus the new conservation bureau all have executive directors and staff, consultants and reports, and you're paying for it in your bill. There's no question about it. You're going to be paying more, not for electrons but for Liberal bureaucracy.

There were organizations in place that could have been modified, perhaps should have been modified, and I believe were expert. Many of these people will be transitioned. In fact, they'll get a severance package to move to the new organization.

I would say that I'm not in any way opposed to the idea of having renewables. These are new forms of energy sources like wind, solar, biomass, ethanol, all these new sources, as you have an innovative economy empowering the universities. In fact, we started that process. We had defined in regulation and in name, I believe, four universities to be centres of excellence for energy. One of the centres of excellence was in my riding of Durham, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. It has the first nuclear engineering program, I believe, in North America. But on top of that, the University of Waterloo, the University of Toronto and I believe Queen's University were identified as centres of excellence for energy, looking at innovation in technology, looking to the academic community to invest in research and research grants, along with the federal government, because renewables are an important part of our going forward on sustainability issues. I include in that all of the new fuels and the new types of harvesting of energy. I mean the word "harvesting" because when you take wind out of the sky and take wind out to power a turbine, you are harvesting the wind. There are side effects for all forms of energy.

But when I look through the whole bill—I listened all summer to the input. We thought long and hard, and I'm going to put on the record now some of the concerns I have. Actually, if you look at Bill 100, it's about power, but not the kind of power that keeps the lights on in businesses across Ontario; it's the kind of power that the Minister of Energy controls over Ontario's energy sector. We saw that no more clearly demonstrated at his most recent fundraiser, which happened to be just a few days

before the RFP, the request for new generation bids, at his golf tournament fundraiser. There was much to-do in the press about it, but I think it sets a very unsavoury tone in a very important public policy area. I'll say no more. I could go on about that.

Ministerial appointments: When I looked at the process of the original bill, the appointments were supposed to be so much arm's-length. These people were not to have any conflicts, real or perceived, and now most of this has been changed. The minister's going to appoint the people directly. All the decisions are basically made by and for the minister. Bill 100 gives the minister direct control over the board of directors of two new bureaucracies, entities being created under the new Ontario Power Authority and the conservation bureau. You heard in the minister's own remarks: He and Dalton single-handedly—probably Greg Sorbara had a hand in it because he's kind of the Deputy Premier—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Kind of?

Mr O'Toole: Well, he'd like to be the Premier, actually. Probably Greg will tell Dwight who he's appointing, really. That's how it'll work. I hate to say it. I think Minister Duncan means well, but there will be political friends. Keep your eye in the paper. It's already started.

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There's also a third new body being formed, which is the Independent Electricity System Operator. It's currently the Independent Electricity Market Operator, IMO, and is now getting a new name and a somewhat different mandate. I'm concerned about that transition of those employees, excellent employees. It's just government tinkering and a bit of a shell game going on there.

My caucus proposed a number of amendments to Bill 100, and not one single one was accepted by the Liberals. The PC caucus proposed that the appointment of the OPA and conservation bureau be subject to review by an all-party government agency committee of the Ontario Legislature. The Liberals said no to that very simple, almost housekeeping-like amendment. It's all in the minister's and the Premier's office. This is inside baseball. Unless you buy the tickets to Dwight's golf tournament and pony up, I'm afraid you're going to be left out.

This behind-door approach goes right back to the red book and the blue box promise of more transparency and accountability. Not even married a year and they're already divorced from their original promises, the promise to honour, obey—whatever.

In fact, if I may digress for a moment in the limited time I have left, everyone has bought in—in fact, most of the Liberal ministers are nodding and the Liberal government is nodding—that there are 231 promises in their red book. I put to you today that I think there are about 265 promises. I think the number of promises is growing as we uncover the financial analysis done on the 60-page report that they hid from the public. If I go through the Ministry of Energy, not one of their so-called commitments was priced; the Ministry of Natural Resources. There's a whole series of incidental commitments made

by members then who were not ministers, and it's becoming clear, as the analysis gets closer and the scrutiny more suspect, that there's way more than—they would promise the moon and break all the promises by noon. That's off-topic a bit, but it says this whole thing about the litany on this energy bill: new rates and higher fees.

As mentioned, Bill 100 creates three new bodies to deal with electricity issues. If only we could harness the Liberals' desire for more bureaucracy and tax increases, we'd have a new energy source that could power Ontario for years to come; well, it could power them for about another 3.7 years. Three years, I guess, would be the anniversary of the election in 2007.

I've talked about the consultations that were held at the golf tournament; I won't go into that any more.

Bill 100 gives the OPA the ability to increase fees and raise levies as it sees fit. We asked members of the social policy committee to pass an amendment to prevent this from happening but, like all of the other good proposals, they voted it down. Now the minister approves the fees in his office, or probably Dalton or Greg's office—Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance. It worries me that it has gone to the centre. Most of the backbenchers—I see them nodding, perhaps going to sleep; I'm not sure. This has gone to the centre, this issue, and they're in trouble on it, actually. They are in trouble, there's no question, because once the 12 million Ontarians get wind that their price is going up by as much as 25% or more, with no end in sight—it's like their insurance promises: auto insurance, car insurance, small business insurance. One promise they should have made is that everything's going up and the delivery of service is going down. This, simply summed up, is another litany of broken promises.

When I asked the minister about rising electricity rates in committee in August of this year, he said to me, "It's a mug's game." I'd expect more from a senior minister of government than to just shrug his shoulders and ignore the plight of consumers on a product that's not discretionary.

I got a letter today from the industrial sector, and it's shocking, the ripple effect. Now, much of this, in defence of the minister, is not of Minister Duncan's making. It's a world phenomenon: an expanding economy in China, the troubles in the Middle East on the supply of fuels, a variety of sources. They all come down to an energy issue at the end of the day.

The feedstock for the industrial sector, the heartland of not just the United States but certainly Ontario and Canada, not to speak of the petrochemical industry, is basically fuel. It's natural gas or some form of crude oil. They make the plastic bags and the recycling bins and the cars we drive. They make everything. They manufacture them and we use them for our standard of living. As I said before, this is a very, very interesting and complex issue. What they're saying here is, they see prices and the competition for feedstock and natural gas as being seriously problematic to the petrochemical industry and other manufacturers down through the supply line. The auto industry has trouble with bumpers. As you see, now

they're having trouble with steel. They're going to the courts to overturn a contract with Stelco, because Stelco has a supply problem.

This is problematic on the other side, in the plastics and the other kinds of materials that take petrochemicals from the auto sector. The auto sector is a large employment sector in Oakville, Oshawa, certainly in my riding and Brampton. It's a demanding sector: high-paying, skilled jobs.

So this isn't tied together, but that's the context that he's exposed to. The people who are bidding on these RFPs—yes, there were lots of them, because the bank vault is open. They know they're preparing the consumers to get whacked. That is not fair for people on fixed incomes. Who and how, in public policy, are we going to protect those persons who just cannot pass on that penalty any further?

The penalties that I can outline are worrisome for me. I'm going to start in my community; in fact, I'll start in my own family. I think of my own family, in terms of my mother in a retirement home, where we pay a certain amount. Their insurance is going up, the cost of health care and the other services. Some of the drugs are being delisted. We can see that there's a shortage of doctors where she has to go to a clinic. She has to pay to get there. Now they're delisting optometry. Now they're delisting therapy that she has to now pay for. There's the cost of fuel and electricity, so they've upped the rent. Her increase in pay is not keeping pace. Those people are the citizens of Ontario that we're elected to represent, and I believe they're ignoring them. In fact, in the minister's words, "It's a mug's game. I can't protect consumers." He should be a leader at the cabinet table saying, "Let's get this right, and I'll support continued conservation, getting the thresholds and letting it be a real, competitive discussion in the large-sector consumers, those who have choices to either give me affordable power or I move my plant to Michigan or to Mexico." Those are investor decisions and large commercial decisions.

I'm talking about the persons who can't pass on the buck any further. Not only that, their municipal taxes are going up, their property taxes. The insurance for their house is going up. Their auto insurance is going up. Their driver's licence is going up. Their electricity is going up. It frightens me what they've done in one year to the people I know and represent. We're on the wrong road. This government and this electricity issue, their solution—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I hear Mr Peters, the Minister of Agriculture—who hasn't done one thing for agriculture—saying that we took them down the wrong road. He is taking them down the road. He has abandoned the beef producers in this province. He has abandoned most of the agricultural commodity groups. If he'd only listen to some of the suggestions coming from the constituents in my riding of Durham that they've brought forward to you through the commodity groups—I've heard that they

only wish Helen Johns was back. Honest to God, I hear it all the time.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: See? Now they're laughing at Helen Johns. I'm going to say to the commodity groups, let Steve Peters know that a lot of them are laughing, but it's not at Helen.

I digress because I'm concerned not just about the homeowner but about the manufacturing jobs in those sectors that are manufacturing the waste recycling bins that are made from plastic. The feedstock is natural gas and other petroleum products. Now the waste bins will be made somewhere else and there will be, in my judgment, less to put in them, because there is going to be less economy in the province of Ontario. He has to look at this. As Adam Beck said, it's an economic policy area. We may even have fumbled the file. I'm saying that publicly. But he has not got it right. The only salvation—I am giving a glimmer of hope here—is that he's sending this out for further hearings. In that case, I'm sure he will look at thresholds.

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I haven't even got to part of the issues that were mentioned by the member for Etobicoke Centre, who is the parliamentary assistant. I also have a lot of respect for her. She did make reference to one of the creditworthiness issues. If you read the report on creditworthiness, you're going to find that what they said is that all the debt is supported by the government. It has no legislative authority at this time, and its creditworthiness was based on the province of Ontario's credit rating, period. You can read the report from the Dominion Bond Rating Service. It's four pages long. I can tell you, it does not say what you've implied. It's a serious issue. It was raised during the hearings.

It says that there is going to be this reconciliation portion of their file. In fact, I will read it, because it's worth reading. It says that they're going to have to have a little fund, and that fund is going to be—I've got so much paper here. Briefly, what it says is that at the end of each year the Ontario Energy Board is going to set the rate. It will be done on an annual basis, and at the end of the year, this transition fund—sort of like a sinking fund—if the rate is lower than the real cost of electricity, then there is this real debt. The province's revenue or the OPA—if revenue is down, there will have to be a surcharge, or at the end of the year you get a surprise bill, like you do with natural gas when they say, "By the way, the rate that was set by the energy board was too low, so from here on there is going to be this rate which is going to make up for the loss that we incurred because of underpricing for the year." So at the end of the day, the consumer is the only person who is putting new money into this.

He talked about a \$25-billion to \$40-billion investment in the electricity sector. Guess where that is coming from. Not from the province of Ontario; it's coming from the people buying electrons. If that isn't a tax, then you've got it wrong.

This variance account that they keep talking about in the bond rating report outlines the four potential risks and the reasons for setting the thing, and it comes out here that the OPA cost repayment related to the various contracts for which it is responsible or for which it will be the settlement agent will be largely known ahead of time and will be incorporated into the annual rate plan by the Ontario Energy Board and into the adjusted market price levied by the IESO.

You are going to pay it, period. If they had power purchase agreements with other contract agencies—a steel plant, a pulp and paper mill, a petrochemical industry—we'll have a power purchase agreement at a rate where they'll say, "That's the rate and that's what I'm paying."

These new RFPs: There will be subcontracts with the wind generators. Wind is somewhat more expensive than 5.3 cents a kilowatt at the moment. I'm supportive of wind, but it has to be subsidized somehow. If they don't subsidize it directly, they're going to subsidize it indirectly, which is appropriate. But be honest, straightforward and open with the people of Ontario and tell them that you're going to incent it and how you're going to incent it.

In my view, if you put wind generators across the whole province, without trying to be dramatic, you wouldn't replace 20% of the electricity generation in this province and you couldn't see the CN Tower for wind turbines. Each one of those big turbines is what they call an intermittent power source, and it's about 1.5 to 2.5 megawatts. A normal fossil plant, natural gas, is about 500 megawatts. To replace one natural gas plant, basically you'd have to have about 1,000 windmills. We have 25,000 megawatts and growing, and they're going to eliminate about 75% or 80% of our supply.

I'm going to run this by you. Their commitment on coal generation, by any measure, by any expert—I'm just repeating what I read—says that it's not doable. In fact, I think they're starting to listen to this one because most of the experts in the generation supply task force report said they should modify that.

We, when in government, closed, by legislation—Elizabeth Witmer—the Lakeview fossil coal generation plant. That's going to happen in 2005; we did it. There's a huge issue around closing that plant because it's a generation supply coming from within Toronto. Let's say it's 500 megawatts. Those 500 megawatts now have to come in from somewhere else. They have to come in on the grid to get to the point of end use. You can't have them up in Manitoba at the dam, because for every kilowatt you generate in Manitoba, by the time you get it to Toronto, there would be half a kilowatt, because the electrons dissipate by resistance through the wires. So you have to have the generation somewhere close, and it's going to have to be built. If you take 7,500 megawatts off the system without finding adequate, reliable replacement power, it's absolutely wrong.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: If you take 7,500 megawatts, about a third of the generating capacity of Ontario, off the system, where are you going to get the electricity?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): What are you going to do?

Mr O'Toole: What are you going to do? I think you'll probably rethink your promise.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I would be surprised.

OK, so let's say you're going to buy the replacement power. I have two propositions for you here. I look at the member from Sault Ste Marie. Atikokan and Thunder Bay aren't even part of the problem, but they have transmission problems. If you cut out the generation in Atikokan and Thunder Bay, where are you going to get the electricity? Probably from Ohio. What's that coal? It's going to be dirtier coal than you're burning in those plants.

Most of the problems I see are ill-conceived and really not designed for the best possible outcomes. When I go back and look at places like Nanticoke, I believe we suggested one amendment on the coal technology issue. We recognized that. In our own policy documents, the clear objective was to replace coal. We moved an amendment that would have permitted the government to not reduce emissions standards—to have the highest emissions standards possible—and to look at clean coal technologies around the world. I include in “clean coal technologies” the use of peat as a fuel source. There is an excellent academic paper on peat replacing or augmenting coal. Peat has no sulphur and it has no mercury, which is one of the problems with coal. Even clean coal technology does not replace some of the mercury particulate matter.

All energy has problems. All energy sources—nuclear: In the future sometime we are going to have these problems. So it's deferred emissions. Do you follow me?

I represent a nuclear riding, with the Darlington nuclear plant—an excellent plant. We've become reliant and dependent and we need to make sure it's safe and reliable, that's for sure, and we need to have strong enforcement. But they wouldn't even consider allowing us to discuss it. Yet a secret leaked document indicates that the Liberal caucus offsite, where they have luxurious hotels and suites and stuff like that—and they're government; I understand that. They're going to be caucusing this very topic that I am bringing up, at their offsite retreat, a kind of pre-Christmas party or whatever. They're going to be talking about the coal decision. If you really want to stay in government—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: —I'm trying to help you—you've got to recognize that the coal solution may be a bit premature.

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I'm just saying that the Ontario economy basically needs to pay attention to some of the amendments that they refuse to even listen to, actually. That troubles me. It really does.

If I go through the input that I've received on Bill 100—I think it's important—there are a couple of things. I met with the Society of Energy Professionals last week—they had a reception here. They have come up with a series of innovative suggestions. These are the people who work in the industry, and I encourage the minister to work with them. There's a lot of issues around the closing of the coal plants, 7,500 megawatts, which is a long-term, laudable objective. What do we do with those people and jobs? We can't replace all of that power from a water dam in Manitoba some 10 years away. It's going to take too long, and there are a lot of inefficiencies in that. The transmission corridors in your backyard—the environmental assessments will be somewhat musical to your ears. As Jim Wilson brought to my attention, it's not going to be healthy for his riding because those transmission corridors are, for the most part, unsightly. I met with Andrew Müller, Bill Jones, Rod Sheppard and Leslie Forge and a number of people, who brought some excellent ideas to the table. I believe Howard Hampton has met with them as well. They did present to the Bill 100 social policy committee in August. That's one group that I wanted to put on the record as I do respect.

When I was looking back at some of the policy discussion here, it says, “Electricity Prices/Paying for Bill 210.” This was our bill. I'm going to read a quote. This is like a little game to get you back on track to see if people are listening. “Question: If you're elected to the Premier's office tomorrow, Mr McGuinty, what do you do to fix the hydro situation as it is today?” This is Mr McGuinty's response—I'm quoting here, on November 13, 2002: “First of all, we have to maintain rate relief for consumers.” The first thing he did was whack them. The first thing he did was increase the price. Here's what he said: “I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature, people who have been put ... in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro. So we've got to maintain rate relief for our ratepayers.”

Mr Marchese: What, he didn't know that before the election?

Mr O'Toole: Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter knew it, but he didn't know it. That's Dalton McGuinty and Bill Carroll on CFRB on November 13. Thank you, Bill Carroll, for giving me this.

I'm going to have a little more media-friendly quote here. The members for Hamilton might want to listen up. They'll recognize this: “The government is maintaining its position that by the time the price freeze plan ends in 2006, the rebate and freeze will have a net cost to taxpayers of zero.... Tom Adams, of the lobby and watchdog group Energy Probe, says it's mathematically possible that the government is right.”

They recognized, when they bought into the rate freeze of 4.3 cents, that the plan was to increase generation capacity, which will reduce the price, and that it was going to take six years to have price stability. Dalton knew it; they voted for it. The first thing they did

was go to the pocketbooks and raise the tax brackets. There it is. These aren't props. This is from their little booklet. I've got it here with a nice picture of Dalton: "I won't raise your taxes one cent. Only kidding."

I want to put on the record Peat Resources Limited. I've read it in some detail. Should I cite the source?

Mr Marchese: Go ahead; read it.

Mr O'Toole: Yes. "Electrically, Ontario Has Alternatives...."

"Dr Thomas states in a 21-page report that abandoning Ontario's old publicly-owned model that, 'despite some faults, has a good record of ensuring supply security over many decades, in favour of a model with, at best, a mixed track record seems unduly risky.'

Ontario's peat fuel potential "is comparable to what we have unearthed in Athabasca." In other words, in Ontario the peat resource is Athabasca tar sands.

They go on to say, "The 2007 deadline the Ontario government has set for closing the province's coal-fired power plants is getting closer. (Dr Thomas doesn't think it is a good idea.) And, as of press time, it was reported that the OPG nuclear generation plant's four 'B' reactors have problems with their pressure tubes...."

He goes on to say that part of the replacement is the use of peat. He talks about the efficiency of peat. It sounds like going back to Ireland, my homeland, many generations ago, but peat fuel is \$42 per tonne; it is \$2.13 per million British thermal units. Coal is \$60 a tonne and \$2.32 per million British thermal units. Natural gas is \$3.54 per million British thermal units. It costs more for natural gas than peat. If you look at this report, it tells you that there are fewer emission hazards. I just encourage the society and other people to look at these alternatives as we go forward.

What I'm hearing more about is the smart meter argument. That's a whole different debate. I have some issues there. I think the smart meter is a little way down the road. I think we need to get into demand management before we get into smart meters. Actually, there are a couple of different types of meters.

This is from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters' presentation to the committee on social policy on August 12: "Cost squeeze (percentage change...)." It goes on: Selling price has gone down; wage rates have gone up 11%; raw materials; payroll—electricity has gone up 32.4% and insurance rates have gone up considerably as well.

Mr Dunlop: Oh, but they're going to put that down 20%.

Mr O'Toole: Yes. When the prices go up, they either have to pass those prices on—and this association represents a lot of the manufacturing sector in our economy. It's a good cross-section of manufacturers—auto sector, steel, you name it—and they have some suggestions here for the minister as well.

AMPCO, which is the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario—I was just blown away. Their report was presented also on August 12. I would be happy to send people copies of it. These aren't my words;

these are the words of Mike Kuriychuk from Bowater pulp and paper, Darren MacDonald from Gerdau Ameristeel and George Bletcha from Falconbridge mining, three of the industries that reported. I can report here in very short order in a general sense that they figure the price of their fuel, which is about 60% of their cost of production generally, is going to go up 50% with these changes.

If you are working in mining in, let's say Sudbury or Nickel Belt or any of those areas, you're going to see that it is going to have an economic effect. This doesn't even talk about other sectors like agriculture. But I do say, it does talk about the large consumers, pulp and paper being important, the manufacturing sector and the forest industry. This was Bowater's presentation.

I'm just going to read here on page 13:

"Electricity is a significant percentage of the cost of production:

"—depending on the technology, can be greater than 25% of product cost;

"—often it is second only to the cost of raw materials (fibre);

"—in Ontario, electricity costs have already escalated out of control."

That is said by them, not me. So they are looking for some relief.

This is from Darren MacDonald from Gerdau Ameristeel Corp. They operate in Cambridge and Whitby. Somewhat familiar. There's a total of 873 employees. Investment in Ontario since 1990 is a third of a billion dollars. They compete with Tennessee and Georgia and all over the place, and they have a chart here that talks about their costs in Ontario versus other jurisdictions. What they measure is efficiency gains in their industry, how they have been working on internal conservation—which, by the way, is the right thing to do. I support those efficiency measures, working with the ministry to have what I call demand-management plans and demand-responsiveness plans where they can shut production down in bad times.

The mining industry was very, very big. This is Falconbridge. We're talking about sales in the \$2.1-billion to \$4-billion range. We're talking about employees in Kidd Creek, Timmins, Sudbury. The Ontario average consumption is 230 megawatts; one of the largest consumers, two terawatt years. The average cost per year is \$120 million. This is a very interesting statistic here: "For every \$1 per megawatt increase"—that's one cent per kilowatt—"our costs increase by as much as \$2 million."

So when he thinks about a 10% and 20% increase, we're basically making them uncompetitive in mining. We know how tough it is in the resource sector, and even if it's not the refining—maybe they'll just move the refining sector out. But that is an extremely interesting report.

The Calpine Corp commented as well—Greg Kelly. They had some commitments to renewable energy—and, in my view, very worthwhile. I would say, though, the

bottom line is when Dwight said he can't shield consumers. This is where I was most perplexed. The joint project with Manitoba, as I said earlier, is many years away. It's laudable. We started the initiative, as government, to look at it. In fact, Howard Hampton cancelled it, because it is a difficult long-term commitment by government to make. They have just announced proceeding with that second phase of the review, and I support that move as well.

I just want to put on the record a couple of sections here that we tried to move. I can't believe they voted them down. That's what's so unnerving about this.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Did they pass any of the amendments?

Mr O'Toole: No, they never passed them.

Mr Yakabuski: Not one?

Mr O'Toole: This is one here.

Mr Yakabuski: Not a single amendment?

Mr O'Toole: There were hundreds of amendments made. They sat there silently and ignored it, basically. This is one here; we wanted them to have public hearings on any rate increase.

Mr Yakabuski: That's a good idea.

Mr O'Toole: It seems fairly simple to me. But they went on and said no.

So I am just putting the people of Ontario on some notice that I am available to listen to your concerns. Whether or not the minister is prepared is quite different, but I am prepared to bring your voice to the floor here so that the minister gets it right.

I can only say that we have very little time left in the very limited time I've had, and it just seems that we aren't making a lot of progress. I am beginning to think I should move adjournment of the debate.

Mr Speaker, I'm moving adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham, Mr O'Toole, has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2023 to 2053.

The Acting Speaker: All those members in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

All those members opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 8; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I'm not surprised by the government, except to say that in their leadoff remarks tonight on second reading of Bill 100, they didn't even use all their time. It's going to send a clear signal that they haven't got much to say on the issue.

But there are more questions than answers. That point has been established. If you look at the orders and notices

paper, you will find that there are a number of questions I have placed in the Parliament of Ontario, all directed to the Minister of Energy. These remind me of unanswered questions. Just for the record, I'm going to cite a couple of them.

I have questions on the order paper on the recent trip of the minister and staff et al to Europe this summer. Who went on the trip? How much? What did they discover? It's early in their mandate, and they're already showing signs of considerable mismanagement, in my view.

Also, the minister made a commitment to me in committee that he would have consultations on the regulations. I've asked with whom he has consulted, besides those who were listed in the Toronto Star who paid to go to the \$1,000 fundraising golf game.

What about the Electricity Distributors Association, the \$225-million conservation fund on smart technology, time-of-rate and time-of-use metering? I have questions on that as well. The smart technology is an open-ended question. We're not certain the minister is up to that job.

Would the minister provide details on how the new administration costs of the OPA, the conservation bureau and the IESO are going to be funded? By the consumer.

The Minister of Energy gets details on how the government will encourage the development of wind energy in Ontario. We need to know what specific renewable energy tariffs are being considered. What are the targets? He said that it's 5% and 10%. What is the generation capacity of a reliable, consistent source of power to keep the economy of Ontario going?

A number of the stakeholders I mentioned earlier who keep me posted on the issues—I do thank them publicly, and I could repeat a lot of their names. One of the more important issues they have brought to my attention is the new regulation dealing with bundling the rates. This is somewhat troublesome. They talked about transparency, but what they're going to do on the new electricity bill is that all the charges for the energy board, the conservation bureau and the IESO are going to be buried in your rate. If you conserve, it's not going to save you five cents. This rate burden for these charges that are approved by the minister in secret cabinet meetings is going to be imposed on the bill over and above the high cost of electrons that I spoke of tonight.

I would have to say that in my riding I'm richly rewarded by having a lot of advisers. As I said before, I have lists and lists of them. All of them would be constituents. I would say that respectfully. It's in that vein that I am speaking tonight, on behalf of the consumers of Ontario, to be very wary that the price is going to increase; by how much, even in open dialogue on the record with the minister, he has refused to answer. He doesn't know.

I've outlined a number of questions on the order paper, none of which has been answered. There are more questions than answers, but one thing is certain: At the end of the day, your electricity bill is going to go up and you're going to pay for mismanagement and a lack of

vision, not just by Minister Dwight Duncan but, I put to you, by the Premier of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I do want to agree with the member on one specific thing out of the whole speech, although there's much more that one could say. I do want to focus on the whole promise that the Liberals made before the election to keep the cap, the rate freeze, on electricity until 2006.

Hon Mr Duncan: Rosario.

Mr Marchese: I'm not wrong, I hope.

Hon Mr Duncan: You voted against it first, and then you voted against taking it off.

Mr Marchese: Ah, you see? The minister is going to have an opportunity to do two minutes again and again, and I'm looking forward to the other Liberal members using their 20 minutes to refute the arguments the Tories have made and refute the arguments I will make in approximately 10 minutes. I am looking forward to the 20 minutes all of you are eager and hungry to deliver in this place.

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I've got to tell you, the Liberals made a promise before the election that they were going to keep the rate freeze till 2006. We didn't agree with the Tories when they did that. We didn't agree with the Liberals when they did that. We believed they were both wrong. We believed the Tories were putting aside a \$1-billion problem, and the Liberals didn't seem to mind that that billion bucks would have to be paid. So for many months leading to the election and immediately after the election, when it happened—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Duncan, I'm looking forward to your two minutes.

I'm just telling the good people of Ontario who are listening that it didn't take you more than a couple of days after being elected, fresh from your election, to break the promise to freeze electricity rates. How does that work? How do you do that? It takes a real man and a real leader to break a promise like that, and McGuinty is the man. He did it, and he's going to continue doing it over and over and over again.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I've been sitting here listening to the comments from the member from Durham, and I do think it's time for a little bit of a reality check. Let's talk about the situation we found when we came into office a year ago. Think about what went on. First of all, we had the Tories, who thought they'd decontrol the price of electricity. As the member from Durham pointed out himself, this led to a desperate condition with wildly rising energy prices, where in fact consumers—the homeowners, the small businesses—couldn't afford to pay their electricity bill. That went on for a few months, and the Tories panicked and brought in a price cap. The price cap they brought in was below the cost of actually producing the electricity. While, as the member from Durham pointed out, it might be mathematically possible that this would work, what

really happened was that in just one year it cost this province \$1 billion. Their price cap cost \$1 billion.

They had a total lack of planning for new generation capacity. During their watch, there was no new generating capacity built in Ontario. The NDP had made it even worse. They cancelled the one from Manitoba that was going to bring on new generating capacity. The Tories totally bungled the retrofit of nuclear generation. That is what we are dealing with in Bill 100. We are going to bring back planning, price stability and renewable generation, and we will provide for conservation.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague's fantastic speech. I thought he hit all the key points. As far as I'm concerned, he raised one very important issue here: There are a lot more questions to be answered than there are answers to questions so far. We know that if you listen to the Liberals here tonight in their comments, you would think you're living in a perfect world with the electricity market. Time will tell. We'll watch very carefully over the next couple of years. We've seen a number of broken promises, and we've seen a lot of questions unanswered. As we go forward, we'll look at the market and see how many people can afford to live in their homes with the price of electricity.

One point I wanted to raise tonight is the Liberal government and their plans for debate in this House. I've seen three bills up for first reading in the last four days, and so far you've only used half your time in your leadoff speeches. As important as these types of bills are, I find that it is extremely disappointing that the government of the day would only use half of their leadoff time. I thought we were here to debate the issues. Tonight, with 30 members in the House, we have a 15-minute leadoff by the minister and a 15-minute leadoff by the parliamentary assistant. That is absolutely disgraceful. It's disgraceful that in a leadoff speech, with a bill like Bill 100, that's the best they can do. Then they chastise us for ringing the bells.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I can tell you, Mr Leader, you're in for a long fall if you keep that up. You do your full leadoff time like a responsible government should do, and then you might gain some respect around here.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a sense we're living in a kind of mirror image of the world in here. We've just had our House leader chastised for not speaking long enough when the official opposition wanted to shut the debate down and go home. They weren't interested in it.

Mr Dunlop: Then start speaking to the bill.

Mr Parsons: They don't even want to hear what I've got to say tonight.

We have had them make accusations against our leader and against our party, but the question is—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I can hardly hear my colleague behind me. You haven't called this member to order. I don't know what he's been doing—

The Acting Speaker: Mr House Leader, you're participating in it. Have your seat and I'll listen to the member.

Mr Parsons: If you look back in history, the problem that this province faced was by a leader and a party that would not acknowledge—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Have a seat. The House leader and the member from Simcoe North, that's enough. I want to hear the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr Parsons: Thank you, Speaker.

I have always admired an individual and organization that looks at the facts and makes the best decision. If we look at where the rate cap came from the previous government, it came from the back of an envelope over a weekend because the polls said that they were in trouble. There was no consultation with experts. There was no consultation with the community. A price was set that they thought would get them re-elected. They should actually be relieved that they didn't get re-elected when you look not only at the electricity issue but the entire budget mess they had created.

I have a great deal of respect for Premier McGuinty and our Minister of Energy, who looked at and researched the facts. It became very apparent, folks, that the price that was politically motivated was not sustainable. Indeed, it was so artificial because what the public was not paying on the bill, they were paying in an increased debt. It's viewed sometimes as a weakness, but I applaud our party for saying, "Here is the information. We will do the best to make a sustainable electricity supply for this province."

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the member from Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I thank the member from Trinity-Spadina. I'm looking forward to his remarks, but I am sure he will speak on the promises broken.

The member for Guelph-Wellington: The reality situation they found themselves in supports the argument that I believe I have established, that they flip-flop continuously. They supported it and they broke a promise. You have to be leery when you are dealing with someone when you can't trust what they're saying.

The member for Simcoe North had it right, that they really didn't use their time on a very important policy debate. That needs to be on the record, and I am restating it here.

The member from Prince Edward-Hastings was using the time in his manner as well.

There are two important issues left to put some definition around. One, from a viewer who is interested in this area, was sent to me on an e-mail with respect to regulation 275/04, which starts on September 1. This is on the bundling of all the rates—the delivery charges—that is not transparent to the consumers. They say, "I think Dwight Duncan should be called to task ... for this very deceptive and misleading bill format. Industry insiders think he is nuts." I didn't say that; it's pointed out as evidence here this evening.

I am more surprised by the disdain that he holds not just my constituents in but your constituents in. The media people understand the pressure we were under, the pressure the NDP were under and the pressure they will be under to acknowledge that this commodity is like no other commodity; it's not like whether or not you buy brand A cereal or brand X or cable television or a cellphone. It's an essential product. What he said to the people of Ontario actually alarmed me. He said, "The bottom line is, I can't shield consumers from prices. It's a mug's game." That's not acceptable from a minister or the Premier—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?
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Mr Marchese: Before I begin my 20 minutes, I would like to have unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? It is agreed.

Mr Marchese: I want to say hello to the public that is watching and welcome them to this political forum. The time is 9:10, it's Monday, and I am happy to be able to be here to debate again. It has been a long summer, and I know a whole lot of people out there are just hungry to see the debate.

Mr Rinaldi: What time is it in Cameroon?

Mr Marchese: The good people of Ontario, the comics behind me were saying, "What time is it in Cameroon?" I want to tell you, I was in Cameroon last week. People think one should be frightened to say that that's why they're trying to be comical on this side and comical on the other side. They think someone like me would be too afraid to say where I've been. I want to tell you where I was: observing the elections in Cameroon as part of the francophonie. It was an interesting election; one where, if people are interested and the Liberals are interested in knowing more about it, I'd be very happy to talk to them about it.

In the meantime, I want to talk to you about Bill 100, that bill of which I am highly critical, and our leader will do much of the same and more because he will have the leadoff, meaning he will have a whole hour to be able to talk a whole lot about this bill. So he's going to have a lot more to say than I do.

I know the people are hungry to see the debates in this place, and that is why I'm happy to be back to debate Bill 100 and start with the broken Liberal promise having to do with the rate cap.

Mr Leal: What about the broken NDP promises?

Mr Marchese: What matters is the promises that Liberals have broken and are breaking steadily. More than anything else that we've done here in the past, it's what you have done and what you're doing that counts. You have to understand this: You are in charge; you are in power. And when you are in power, what people want to know is what you said and what you are doing now.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, no. They want to know what you said and what you're doing now. You can say all you want, and I hope all of you use your 20 minutes because you should, you need to, so you can explain to the public,

as one Liberal member did before, saying, "We didn't know what the situation was before, and of course we had to break our promise." They don't quite say it that way. "Of course we had to break our promise, because the reality we faced after the election was totally, totally different." Who do you believe is going to believe you when you say that?

McGuinty, before the election, said the following: "I think the most important thing to do at this particular point in time"—meaning that at some other point he can change his mind, which he does, because that's what Liberals do—"is to put a cap on those rates through to 2006." He didn't say "through to 2004," or 2005, even, but he went further and said "2006." At that particular point in time, November 23, 2002, he said, "We're going to support the cap." After the election, he says, "At this particular point in time we changed our minds." That is what Liberals do. The times change, the elections change, they get elected, they weren't elected before, and all of the sudden the promise to keep the rates on is gone.

Why do they break the promise? Because we just can't afford to keep the rates capped because it's costing us close to \$1 billion a year. McGuinty is a smart guy. He's a lawyer, I'm told. You'd think he would know that that particular promise, at the time he made it, was costing us already \$600 million or \$700 million, more or less, give or take a couple of pennies. You would think that, as a lawyer, he would know. I don't think it necessarily takes a genius to know that if you've got a debt, because of the cap of \$600 million, it's going to keep on climbing; and if you keep it until 2004, it's going to be, oops, a little more; and in 2006—oh, my God—it's going to be unaffordable.

The election gets called. All of a sudden, McGuinty and the gang discover the deficit is really, really high, because they didn't know, you see. They were just so much in the dark that they could afford to make whatever promise they wanted and think that they could get away with it. So at this particular point in time, having discovered we've got a deficit, we can't keep the rate cap any more. So much for the promise; it's gone.

See the kind of leadership it takes? It takes a real man to be able to break a promise, and Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal gang can do it, because they're just so strong in being able to break promises. It's not easy breaking it. It takes some fortitude, you understand, to be able to break it. We've got a strong Liberal bunch, male and female, eager and intent on breaking that particular promise. I just wanted to make that point clear.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's true. Tories and New Democrats don't agree on much.

Mr Leal: You voted the same. You went to the Albany Club, after voting with them for the private school tax credit.

Mr Marchese: We're the same? No, no, we're not the same. I'm going to show you in a few minutes—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Hold on, Jeff. You're getting all excited. I want to show you in a few moments where you Liberals and you Tories have so much in common as it relates to the private sector, deregulation, getting back into the retail market and getting back into the spot market. I'm going to show you in a couple of minutes—

Mr Leal: You've got it wrong.

Mr Marchese: Jeff.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, Speaker, I don't mind. This place has to be interactive. You can't just let one guy speak, with the other people all silent. I like the interaction, please. It's an interactive assembly, as it should be, because that's what the public wants. The public likes to see debate, controversy, excitement. Right, Jeff?

Mr Parsons: And consistency.

Mr Marchese: Especially consistency. Ernie hit it on the button. Liberals have no problems when it comes to the issue of consistency, because when you're inconsistent, that is consistency for you guys. I understand that. I know that. The problem is, the public doesn't know that.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Yes, the Tories and New Democrats are just like this. I have to admit that it is true in one regard: They have principles that we disagree with but are consistently on the right; we have principles that they disagree with that are consistently on the left. What we disagree with is the fact that Liberals have no consistency whatsoever. That is true.

Mr O'Toole: Do they stand for anything?

Mr Marchese: They stand for nothing and everything at the same time, which is a feat. I've got to tell you, it's Herculean in nature, because it's not easy to do. That's why Tories are there, we're here and they're everywhere.

All right, back to Bill 100. Before I get into the bill, I've got to tell you, Minister, that I'm getting tired every time you stand up and say, "The NDP cancelled all the conservation." I don't know where you get that from.

Hon Mr Duncan: They did. It hurts.

Mr Marchese: I'm telling you that we were in a recession.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I love it when Liberals stand up all the time and attack New Democrats for the cuts they made and the deficit that they accrued. I love it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: What do you mean? We introduced a retrofit program that said that electricity, as we have it in many of our metro housing authorities, is inefficient, and we spent millions and millions of dollars in retrofitting. That's conservation, right? That's looking at a system that's inefficient and saying, where do we put the money to make it more efficient?

Where do you get this blah, blah, blah every time you stand up? It's tiresome.

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So what does Bill 100 do? Bill 100 says and is very committed to the idea of having the private sector get into the field of creating electricity. And they're not shy

about it; the Liberals are not shy about it at all. In fact, some of the members who came in front of our committee said, "Look, if you are in agreement that the private sector has a big role to play in the generation of our electricity, creation of electricity, put it in your preamble, put it in your bill; admit we are a big player." I thought, well, that's a novel thing; why don't they just do that? If indeed you are proud of your private sector involvement in the generation of hydro, say so in your bill. I thought it was such a good idea that I proposed it on their behalf and said to the Liberals, "Don't be shy; just say it. Put it out front. Say in the bill that you have no problems whatsoever in relying on the private sector, for the most part, to create new generation of power."

They didn't do it. So you say to yourself, why wouldn't they do that? My sense is that they are perhaps afraid to admit that consumers are likely to pay a whole heap more on the electricity bill come a year or two from now, and it will largely be due to the private sector involvement, I argue. Because why else would they hide from the fact they want the private sector involvement? The minister went to the Empire Club and told them, "Look, I want you guys. Get involved, get into this business." He wasn't too shy to go to the Empire Club and tell the big boys with money, "Don't just contribute to our campaign; get involved in the generation of electricity." So I thought, put it in.

I am telling you, it is going to cost us more—a whole lot more. And there might be and would be possibly, obviously, some accrued kind of cost to the consumer, no doubt. But when the private sector gets involved and you allow the stock market to get in this market, the rates are going to shoot right up. And why are the rates going to shoot right up? Because when the private sector gets involved, they are in it to make money. It is not just the generation of power so that every consumer in Ontario, far and wide, east, west, north and south, would have access to reliable hydro. It is not about that; it is producing hydro—Speaker, you know that—to make pecunia, some money. That's what it's about.

Someone has to pay for that extra profit. Who do you think is going to pay? It is me and you, Speaker. I suspect that you and I can afford it. Our wages are not like the federal members, quite true, but we can still afford it. Our federal counterparts can afford it better than we can; this is true. But there a whole lot of other people, modest-income people, who are just not going to be able to afford the rates. They're not going to be able to do that. We also say—I beg your pardon?

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): If there's a blackout, they'll lose their jobs. They're not going to let that happen. They keep the power on.

Mr Marchese: Keep the power on, yes.

The second problem is, when the private sector has to borrow money, it costs them more. It just does. We, as a government, have the ability to borrow more and cheaper than the private sector. If the private sector can borrow and does, but at a higher cost, who do you think is going to pay for that? We do. And when the risk is too high for

the private sector to get involved—and "risk" means it will cost you more money—who do you think is going to pay for that extra risk for the private sector to get involved? It's me and you. But it is also the percentile of people who are not in the top 10% of income earners. They get whacked. At the bottom levels they're going to get whacked, and whacked seriously. So we say that this is going to affect everyone generally and affect the manufacturing sector as well. People forget that in the debate.

Rates have gone up 30%. Since the fiasco introduced by the Tories while they were in power, rates have gone up 30%. I estimate that rates are going to continue escalating more and more than you can imagine under Bill 100. I am saying that a lot of manufacturing jobs are in jeopardy—they are now. Pulp and paper, chemical and steel and mining could go up to levels that we might find fearful and ought to find fearful. But we're not worried about that. At least this government doesn't seem to be worried about that—no way. The market is not dead, as McGuinty said, because we're just back into the market, in spite of the fact that McGuinty, on November 19, 2002, said, "The market is dead, deregulation is dead, privatization is dead."

What happens to Liberals that they can say these things before and during an election, but after they do exactly the opposite? How could McGuinty say, in November 2002, "The market is dead," and after he got elected in October 2003, "The market is alive again"? We have the retail sector back in the game, meaning the guys are knocking on your door saying, "I can give you a cheaper deal." You have the private sector getting into the spot market again, meaning you pay whatever price the market will bear on the issue of electricity. It seems the private market is not dead, but it was in 2002. How does it happen that in 2002 you can say one thing and in 2003 you get elected and it's a totally different reality? How can that happen? How can the market simply resuscitate after the election and come alive again? How does it happen?

Mr Wilkinson: Were you out of the province when the blackout occurred?

Mr Marchese: No, I was here. And your leader was here as well.

It's interesting how things can change so fast. I'm telling you, I don't believe much of what Liberals say by way of promises. You can see these quotes. You can hear the market is alive, where McGuinty says, on October 31, 2001: "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario." In 2001, McGuinty said that they were consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario; in 2002, he declared that the market was dead; and in 2003, he declared that the market was alive again.

Do you understand what I'm getting at, in terms of how Liberals can have one position one year, another in another year and in the third year come right back to the starting point? How can you have faith in any party that

can so consistently change its mind? I personally have no particular faith whatsoever in this government.

Half of this power is going to come from the private sector, and most of it will be through gas generation. We haven't talked about whether or not we're going to have gas for the next 10 years, 20 years, 50 years or 100 years. It doesn't seem to matter. In the mind of this government, most of this generation will happen through gas, but we don't discuss and/or dispute the possibility that gas may be in short supply. We don't. So we have a serious reliance on the generation of power through gas—that is, 2,500 megawatts that the government says we should have by 2007—but in the documents they say, "Don't worry; it could be 2009." And remember, we're going to get rid of the coal generation plants that produce 7,500 megawatts of power. So we're going to produce 2,500 megawatts through gas generation, but the minister's

own documents say that that doesn't have to be available until 2009.

We have a problem in terms of keeping a promise to get rid of coal and generating enough power to be able to keep the lights on. It's just not going to happen. We have 300 megawatts of green power—ie, through renewable—and there are 4,400 megawatts of power proposed. That's where we should be moving, and we're not moving in that direction. Your move in that direction is so small that it's almost insignificant.

I'm running out of time, I realize. It's close to 9:30 of the clock. I hope to be able to come back to this another time.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 pm, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 19 October 2004

Mardi 19 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to speak about the 2004 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo that took place near Meaford from September 22 to 26. This is the fourth time since 1933 that Grey county has played host to this event. The IPM, as it is widely known, is the biggest outdoor farm and rural living show in Canada. It is a combination of a farm machinery show, an educational experience about rural life and an entertainment spectacular.

I would like to take this opportunity to give thanks and praise to the executive of this year's IPM. Led by co-chairs Pearl and Brian Bumstead, the executive turned the Davison farm into a 90-acre tent city that became host to over 600 exhibits that were visited by more than 80,000 people during the five-day event.

While the Bumsteads and their crew did a fantastic job, even they would have had a tough time pulling it off without the nearly 1,000 volunteers who drove shuttles, directed traffic, took tickets and did anything else they were asked to do. For my part, I had an incredible time working with my Bognor Jam Production and Promotion colleague, Arnie Clark. We organized entertainment in the lounge tent, and it was our pleasure to bring world-class musical entertainment to visitors during the day and to the trailer park residents at night.

To close, I would like to thank the three leaders in this Legislature—Dalton McGuinty, Howard Hampton, and our new leader, John Tory—for attending the match and visiting Grey county. It was great to see each of them up on a tractor, and if any of them would like more practice with this, I invite them to visit my family farm. It was great to see them plowing the manure instead of spreading it.

TERESA CASCIOLI

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to congratulate Teresa Cascioli, president and CEO of Lakeport Beverage Corp of Hamilton. Last week, Teresa was named Ontario Entrepreneur of the Year in the turnaround category by Ernst and Young. She

won this award over 32 nominees representing 29 companies in Ontario.

In 2003, Teresa was named by Profit magazine and its sister magazine, Chatelaine, as one of the top 10 women CEOs in Canada for her role in reviving Lakeport Brewing, a Hamilton company that employs over 200 staff.

Earlier this year, Teresa received the chamber of commerce Athena award, an award that recognizes women's leadership and professionalism and those who mentor in business and the professions. I am pleased to announce that Teresa Cascioli will also be receiving the Ontario Chamber of Commerce outstanding business achievement award on November 10 for outstanding leadership and achievement in business.

We in Hamilton West are extremely proud of the achievements of Teresa Cascioli and congratulate her on reviving such a successful Hamilton business, now the fourth largest brewery in Ontario.

Yesterday, the Honourable Sandra Pupatello spoke eloquently about women's achievements to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Persons Day in Canada. All I want to say to Teresa is, way to go, Teresa.

RIDEAU REGIONAL CENTRE

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Last month, the Minister of Community and Social Services made her now-infamous announcement that she intends to close the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls in 2009. This announcement hit like a bombshell in my riding. The facility's residents, their families and the staff were shocked to learn that this announcement contained no concrete plan to address the future needs of the residents.

Unfortunately, the minister appears to have been forced to make this hasty announcement before she was ready, after publicly musing about her intentions. I share the very concerns I am hearing from families that this decision will only serve to lower the quality of life for many of those directly affected. It will be traumatic for many of the 435 residents, their families and the staff.

With an average age in the 50s, most of the clients consider this residential facility their home. They are familiar with their surroundings and the people who work and live at the centre and are a critical part of their lives. Tearing these vulnerable people away is cruel and harsh. Many of the residents are severely challenged, both mentally and physically, and their needs simply cannot be met in the community.

I'm calling on the minister to immediately reverse this decision. Let the remaining residents live out the rest of their lives with their lifelong friends. Don't separate them from the physical and emotional surroundings which they have relied on virtually all of their lives. I will continue to advocate for the well-being of these residents and ensure they don't fall through the cracks.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to take a minute and a half to talk about the so-called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario, a discussion paper. What I want to say about this is, it is not an equitable allocation of busing throughout Ontario. It is, in fact, inequitable.

I also want to say that it doesn't appear to me to be a discussion paper, although yesterday the minister, in response to my question, said that this is a discussion of a draft document that may happen in terms of a formula for transportation funding. The fact of the matter is that this is not a discussion paper; this is something that is happening. Some boards are affected negatively, and some boards are affected positively. He says, "Don't worry. This is merely a discussion paper."

I want to point out to the minister that the funding for transportation purposes is being phased in this year and the following year. If it were a discussion paper, the funding would not flow this year and next. The fact that some boards are getting money for transportation and some are not is a serious, serious problem. What we say is, there are 31 boards that are not getting more money but will be getting less money this year and more cuts the following year. That's what this inequitable formula is all about.

1340

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I rise in the House today to recognize the good works done by OHRIA, the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association, especially the many charitable causes supported by the Woodbine Entertainment Group in my riding of Etobicoke North.

OHRIA plays a significant part in the economy of Ontario. It contributes \$1.2 billion in taxes and slot revenues to our great province and last year alone donated over \$600,000 to equine research programs at the University of Guelph.

On top of these impressive initiatives, individual horse racing venues make considerable efforts to support the communities in which they operate. For instance, the Woodbine Entertainment Group directly employs over 2,500 people in my riding. In addition, they donate 3% of their net revenue to charitable causes. Last year, the group donated over \$640,000 to charity and will do so again this year.

Just a few of their worthy causes: They are the sole sponsor of the Woodbine Breakfast Club, offering breakfast on a daily basis to more than 100 children. They are a major benefactor of the Dorothy Ley Hospice, which was recognized eloquently last week by the member from Etobicoke Centre. They are also patrons of the Albion Boys and Girls Club, an organization that helps kids realize their potential in many areas, including substance abuse prevention and summer camps. They also make a magnificent annual contribution to Arts Etobicoke.

I call on all members in this House to congratulate the worthy efforts of the Woodbine Entertainment Group.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Yesterday, the government released this glossy, partisan, 16-page, self-congratulating report on their performance thus far. The Premier claimed he had stopped the slide in health care. The report makes the laughable claim that the government is improving access to health care and shortening wait times. Well, let's just say the Premier was a little liberal with the truth.

According to a report by the Fraser Institute, the government's assertion of stopping the slide is inaccurate, and their incompetence is once again exposed as health care access and wait times slide backwards. The fact is that under the McGuinty government—and I quote from the report—"Manitoba achieved the shortest total wait in 2004, 14.8 weeks, with Ontario (15.5 weeks) losing the best-access province status that it had held since 2000...."

Our government earned that title, and in little over a year, the McGuinty government's incompetence has seen Ontario's health care access and wait times decline. But it does not end there. Everything—the referral of a doctor to an appointment with a specialist has increased. The waiting time from the appointment with the specialist to actual treatment has increased from 7.1 weeks to a staggering 8.2 weeks. All of this has happened under the Liberal watch—longer wait times.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today to talk about the Olympics, which got a lot of media attention with Canadians this year. I rise today to recognize a very special athlete from my riding of Oakville. His name is Adam Van Koeverden. During the Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, Adam took home not only the bronze but also the gold medal in the sport of sprint kayaking. This victory, being the highest achievement in athletic competition, is a true honour.

Adam's dedication, discipline and talent to the sport have driven his success and enabled him to reach his goal. At the age of 22, Adam is a natural leader who continues to inspire a generation of children, athletes and, above all, his fellow Canadians as he continues his studies at McMaster University in Hamilton.

A celebration was held in Oakville to showcase not only Adam's accomplishments but also the accomplishments of two other Olympian participants from Oakville: Oskar Johansson placed 15th in sailing and Andrew Hurd finished fifth in the finals of the men's swimming relay and set a new Canadian record. Oakville citizens, athletes from the Oakville community and the mayor and members of council came to the event to recognize their efforts and to celebrate their accomplishments.

I'm extremely proud of these Oakville athletes. I look forward to other opportunities to highlight the achievements of athletes in my riding, as you never know when that young athlete you know on your own street or in your own neighbourhood can one day become an Olympic winner.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Yesterday, the leader of the third party once again exemplified how to be a member of the irresponsible opposition. When the member was asked about our government's hiring of over 1,000 new teachers, he stated, "Go out there and try to find a school board where that's happened, because the school boards will tell you it hasn't happened." Well, the fact of the matter is, we have hired 1,100 new teachers. Not only have we hired new teachers, we have reduced class sizes; 1,300 schools across this province now have classes of 20 or under. This has been made possible by the government's \$800 million in new school funding for education.

If the member wants to talk about rural schools, we'll talk about rural schools. More schools than ever before qualify for rural school funding. This government has given an extra \$31 million to rural schools in the past year.

Here is what the rural school boards have to say. Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board said, "We are happy because there is an appreciation that boards like ours that cover such a huge geographical area are finally being recognized through adjustments to the (funding) formula." Thames Valley: "This money is very much appreciated." Grand Erie: "This is good news."

We are investing in our education system.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): There's been some talk, both around here and in my riding, that hospital beds are closing. I'd like to make it clear that this is certainly not the case. The McGuinty government has invested almost \$470 million in Ontario's hospitals. That is an increase of 4.3% over last year.

In Peterborough and surrounding area, we have invested \$8.8 million in our local hospitals. That money has been used to hire more nurses and start cutting down on surgery wait times. We're also working on cutting down the burden on our hospitals and emergency rooms. To that end, we have locally invested more than \$1 mil-

lion in mental health services, \$1.2 million in community care access centres, more than half a million dollars in community support services, and almost \$1 million in long-term care. That's roughly \$12 million invested in the Peterborough area since the McGuinty government came to power.

Let's not forget the years of Tory mismanagement that left us with our troubled health care system. Do you remember Mike Harris saying he'd push through his agenda without "touching a penny of health care funding"? I do. That was before he shut down 44 hospitals and fired 10,000 nurses.

We're doing things differently. We're transforming health care by investing in health services in our communities throughout Ontario. We're putting our hospitals on a sustainable path, making them more accessible, more responsible and more accountable.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FORFEITED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION DE LA LOI ET L'ADMINISTRATION DES BIENS CONFISQUÉS

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to enforcement powers, penalties and the management of property forfeited, or that may be forfeited, to the Crown in right of Ontario as a result of organized crime, marijuana growing and other unlawful activities / *Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs d'exécution, les pénalités et l'administration des biens confisqués ou pouvant être confisqués au profit de la Couronne du chef de l'Ontario par suite d'activités de crime organisé et de culture de marijuana ainsi que d'autres activités illégales.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister of Community Safety?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'll be making a statement under ministerial statements.

1350

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 129, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): This bill, if passed, amends the Highway Traffic Act to make it mandatory for anyone using in-line skates, a skateboard or any other type of muscle-powered vehicle to wear a helmet. At present, all cyclists in Ontario are required to wear helmets, but regulations passed by the government exempted individuals over the age of 18 from this requirement. This bill removes the government's power to make such exceptions, making it mandatory for all cyclists to wear helmets. It does, however, provide for exemptions for those who cannot wear a helmet due to religious beliefs.

VISITORS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a delegation here, Mr Speaker, I'd like to welcome from Calabria, Italy. We have Professor Caterina Borrelli, Marco Marchese, Massimo Esposito and Angelo Sposato.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELDER ABUSE

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I am honoured today to rise in the Legislature as minister responsible for seniors on this, the first provincial Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario.

As you may recall, earlier this year this Legislature passed a resolution sponsored by MPP David Zimmer calling for an Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and I'm pleased that we will recognize today as Elder Abuse Awareness Day. At the same time, I'm sure we are all sad that the need for such a day exists. Although the vast majority of seniors are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, for a small percentage, abuse is a reality.

To pretend that elder abuse doesn't exist would mean abandoning our responsibilities to those seniors who have suffered abuse or are at risk of being abused. Elder abuse has no place in our Ontario. Seniors have the right to live in safety and security. Our government is committed to maintaining safe, strong communities for all Ontarians, which is why we continue to improve programs and services in this area.

Just over a week ago, our Premier, Premier McGuinty, announced that Ontario will be hiring 600 nurses and 1,400 front-line staff to provide a new, improved standard of care for our long-term-care residents, including having a registered nurse available at all times. We will be providing additional services to assist patients moving from hospitals to long-term-care facilities, and we will

also be providing a Web site and public reporting system to enhance care standards. We will be increasing the comfort allowance to put more discretionary income into the hands of low-income, long-term-care residents. This is the first such increase in almost 20 years. And we froze the accommodation costs for our long-term-care residents. For the first time since 1993, residents' accommodation costs will not increase during a fiscal year.

I could go on about how this government is helping seniors with \$1.3 billion in home care services this year or our investment of \$29.2 million in community care and supportive housing services, but that will be a subject and a statement for another day.

Today, Elder Abuse Awareness Day, is the day for us to improve our understanding of what elder abuse is and how to prevent it, and our opportunity to help others do the same. Elder abuse is generally defined as any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. Elder abuse can take the form of financial, emotional or physical abuse and neglect. By becoming more informed on the topic together, all Ontarians can help prevent elder abuse.

Elder Abuse Awareness Day complements the public education initiatives of our strategy to combat elder abuse, the first strategy of its kind in Canada. Our strategy, developed by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat in my ministry, focuses on three important priorities: co-ordinated local services to help abused seniors, staff training, and public education.

In the event of abuse or suspected abuse, people must know where they can go for help. My colleague the Attorney General will be providing more detail on this point following my remarks.

At the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for seniors, I will be advocating with my colleagues for the establishment of Elder Abuse Awareness Days in other provinces and territories, as well as the establishment of a national Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Canada.

Internationally, the World Health Organization and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse have announced their intention to launch an annual international Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2006. We will work with the international community on a common day. In the meantime, however, we felt it was simply too important to wait, and that is why we've declared this day as Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Today in communities across Ontario, local elder abuse networks are marking this important day with open houses, candlelight vigils and other public-awareness-raising activities. Public education is an important tool in effectively addressing elder abuse, and our government, along with the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, is asking members of this House to join with us in helping to promote this very important day as we move forward.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I would like to thank Minister Gerretsen for sharing his time with me to recognize Elder

Abuse Awareness Day. Special thanks and congratulations to my great parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Willowdale, David Zimmer, for his dedication in addressing this issue. Last spring, David Zimmer introduced a private member's resolution in this House, and that has led directly to the declaration of Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It's because of his actions that we are here today casting light on a disturbing problem that for too long has been shrouded in darkness.

Victims of elder abuse are often too afraid, isolated or embarrassed to speak out. Mr Zimmer called elder abuse one of the last silent issues of our society. So the first step is obviously to raise awareness of the issue itself. Elder abuse is an important component of our government's domestic violence action plan. It's through awareness that victims of elder abuse will understand that they don't need to live in fear or be embarrassed by the abuse they suffer. Through greater awareness, they will know that they can and should reach out for the support they need and that when they do extend their hand for help, their government is there to assist.

Our government is committed to helping to ensure that all victims get the support they deserve. With respect to elder abuse, we have already taken steps to improve the province's victim support line as part of the government's overall strategy to combat elder abuse. Information counsellors who answer calls on the victim support line are trained to offer help to victims of elder abuse. These counsellors understand the dynamics of elder abuse and the psychological aspects that need to be considered when speaking to a senior who may be a victim of this type of abuse. They have been trained to identify the signs and the reasons why seniors may not report it. Counsellors will point callers in the right direction so that they know where to turn in their home community to find the necessary support and services. Victims of elder abuse or anyone concerned about the well-being of a senior are encouraged to call the victim support line. The toll-free number is 1-888-579-2888.

Seniors deserve to be treated with respect, and seniors deserve to be protected from harm. By working together, by raising awareness, by providing assistance through the victim support line, by pointing seniors in the direction of the services they need to recover from elder abuse, we are taking great strides toward protecting seniors from harm and giving them the respect they deserve.

1400

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise this afternoon to make an important announcement that will help make Ontario communities safer for all residents. The McGuinty government intends to do whatever it can to control indoor marijuana grow operations in Ontario. Let me be very clear: We have a plan to deal with the proliferation of these operations that threaten the safety of our communities. The legislation I introduced this afternoon is just the first step in that plan, one that will help

create stronger, safer and more livable communities for all Ontario residents.

Marijuana grow houses are a blight on our neighbourhoods. In York, Peel and Waterloo regions combined, it is estimated that 17% of grow ops were located within 500 metres of a primary or secondary school. They are a problem we all share and they are a problem we must all work together to solve. The Toronto Police Service, for example, has made 248 busts so far this year, resulting in police confiscating more than 83,275 plants.

After the very successful Green Tide Summit that my ministry co-hosted in March with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, I made a personal commitment to continue to work with my cabinet colleagues so that the McGuinty government can maintain its leadership role in this area.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will stiffen laws affecting a number of different areas. The proposed legislation, if passed, would:

(1) allow an electricity distributor to disconnect hydro without notice in accordance with a court order or for emergency, safety or system-reliability reasons;

(2) require building inspections of all homes that police confirm contain a grow op. If building inspectors deem the property unsafe, they are required to issue orders for repair. This would protect people from purchasing a property that would require thousands of dollars of repairs;

(3) double the maximum penalties under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, for any contraventions of the Ontario fire code, such as tampering with wiring that would cause excessive heating that would lead to a fire, something commonly done in grow ops;

(4) set up a special-purpose account so that the proceeds of grow ops and other criminal activities, such as real estate, vehicles and other equipment, can be spent on enforcement, crime prevention and compensating victims.

Police and the private sector asked for the tools to combat grow ops. Today we are giving them those tools.

Many of these grow operators have ties to organized crime and depend on new immigrants and their families to crop-sit. Everyone in society suffers because of these unscrupulous operators.

My ministry co-hosted, with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Green Tide Summit last March. It was the first time that various levels of government, the policing community, the financial sector, the real estate sector, public utilities and other stakeholders had been in the same room at the same time. We shared a great deal of information. We learned of each other's challenges. In the end, we agreed that the best way to control these operators was as a unified group.

There was a common theme: the importance of continuing to build our relationships begun at the summit and to share information. We heard what delegates had to say and we acted accordingly.

That's why, in addition to the legislation I'm introducing this afternoon, I'm pleased to announce that we have implemented another recommendation of the summit,

and that summit will start with the committee tomorrow. I'm sure that when we get their recommendations and we implement them, we will provide a much safer place for the people of Ontario.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased today to stand to respond to the legislation introduced by Minister Kwinter. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who have been the lead in any type of legislation around marijuana grow ops. I know they developed the Green Tide report, and there were a number of recommendations in that leading to the summit. Of course, there are some concerns that we have today around the legislation that we expect will be answered in any type of committee hearings that may be held.

First of all, I see this today as a zero-dollar announcement for law and order in this province.

First of all, I believe as part of the government's election platform they did call for 1,000 new police officers. Once this bill does become law, police in this province will be expected to do more with less, unless we see more police officers announced. The legislation will place an even greater demand on police without providing any more human resources and funding as well.

The one thing I'm not sure of—and we just got a pile of documents from the minister's office—the legislation, I believe, targets only residential indoor grow ops. I'm not so sure it includes factories or grow ops like we saw at the former Molson brewery in Barrie, Ontario, that drew a lot of attention to the grow ops. First of all, I think we have to have an explanation. If it doesn't include those types of facilities, why not? That is where the bulk of the marijuana is grown in indoor facilities.

If the government is really serious about the issue, they should be targeting the drug criminals with tougher sentencing, not the threat of someone pulling a hydro switch. The minister talks about doubling the penalties under this legislation for contraventions of the Ontario fire code, but what about penalties under the Criminal Code, and what is the concern for tougher sentencing?

I have to go for just a moment to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police resolution in June 2003. It says:

"Be it resolved that" the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police "call upon the Premier of Ontario to represent the interests of the law enforcement and community safety within Ontario by urging" once again "the government of Canada to enact immediate" legislation "to provide for minimum sentences of two years as a deterrent for the cultivation of marijuana."

And another question I have to ask is if the minister has consulted on what the federal government is doing about the decriminalization of marijuana. We have no idea what they are doing. I know I'm out of time, and Mr Jackson wants to respond as well.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Truly, all members of this House will support an elder abuse day.

Frankly, to the point, every day should be elder abuse awareness day in this province, and I know we agree on that.

I had hoped that the minister might have taken the occasion to talk about a whole series of programs that were implemented by our government. We're very proud of those, and I'm sure all members of the House are proud of these initiatives.

First of all, the elder abuse strategy, the first of its kind in the world, presented by Dr Elizabeth Podnieks on behalf of our government in Spain two and a half years ago: She has not been given the assurances that the \$4.3 million we committed, and she's been spending, will be renewed.

The Alzheimer's strategy, the first of its kind in North America: Again, a five-year commitment of \$68 million. We have not yet heard from the government on that.

Hang Up On Fraud and Phonebusters, a joint US-Ontario initiative with the OPP and police: No word on that.

Telemarketing screening registry for seniors: No word from the government on that.

The tele-senior program to file objections for age discrimination: We are waiting to hear on that.

The Ontario Residential Care Association's seniors' retirement home complaint registry line: No response from the government.

The seniors' safe medication program with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association: We are still waiting to hear from the government if they are going to support the program.

The Memory Project of the Dominion Institute, recognizing the sacrifice of our veterans, and the expansion of women's shelters with staff training designated for seniors' beds: These are initiatives started by our government that all members of this House support, and we're anxious to hear from the government.

I've mentioned Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, and I think she should be acknowledged today. I'm disappointed that for whatever reason she cannot be here today. She is considered a world expert, and she has led us in a direction that has made our province a better and safer place to be.

Finally, if you are going to list the accomplishments of your government, let's remind seniors that you are in fact increasing their hydro bills; you took away their Ontario home property tax relief, netting them out—about a thousand dollars more you're costing the average senior in this province; and you removed OHIP coverage for chiropractic and physiotherapy.

1410

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are pleased to express our abhorrence for elder abuse. New Democrats have been consistent and clear in advocating and supporting reforms and agendas which protect our parents and our grandparents.

We hear from the government in its statement today that it's concerned about the well-being of seniors. If you're concerned about the well-being of seniors, why don't you keep your promise to ensure that our folks and

grandfolks in long-term-care facilities are given a minimum of two baths per week while in those facilities? You say you're concerned with our seniors. Then why don't you keep your promise to ensure that there are registered nurses on duty 24/7 in our long-term-care facilities? You say you are concerned about our seniors. Then keep your promise to maintain and sustain 2.25 hours of hands-on care per day for our folks and grandparents in long-term-care facilities.

You say you are concerned about our seniors, yet your privatization-of-electricity agenda is forcing hydro rates to skyrocket so that increasing numbers of seniors are going to be forced into homelessness because of your very specific policy around hydro privatization.

You say you're concerned about seniors, but the McGuinty Liberal government is clawing back \$200 million under the drug benefit plan, which will deny so many of our seniors life-sustaining medication, prescription drugs that doctors will be encouraged not to prescribe them.

You say you're concerned about our seniors, yet you are pursuing the Conservative agenda of the privatization of our home care system so that valuable, historic, long-time home care providers from the non-profit sector, like the Victorian Order of Nurses and Red Cross nurses, are being knocked out of their jobs and replaced by for-profit, more often than not American-based, privatized so-called home care companies.

I say this government, if it's really concerned about seniors, will get busy with a meaningful investment in those things that would make seniors' lives truly more productive and healthier. This government isn't part of the solution; it's been part of the problem.

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me say to the Minister of Community Safety: Here we have it, Reefer Madness, part II. I want the minister to understand that the sequel is never as good as the original film.

Look, you want to make our communities safer? I say to the Minister of Community Safety, this government should keep its promise to put 1,000 new cops on the streets of Ontario. That will make our communities safer. That will give people more confidence in their safety and security in their communities.

Minister, you can't flog this horse any more. The horse is not even at the gate. People don't believe this government when it tries to divert their attention and focus their attention on a problem that the police already have the legislation to deal with. The problem is, and you well know it and the cops out there on the streets know it, that there are simply not enough police officers and enough police resources to effect the investigations, the arrests and the subsequent prosecutions that they have to bring these offenders into hand. In fact, there are credible newspaper columnists—not me, mind you, but credible newspaper columnists—who are querying, questioning, has this minister been accessing the evidence

locker and getting his stash out of some of the proceeds of those raids? I mean, the question's been asked, Minister: What is it that you're smoking?

People are concerned about kids out there shooting each other with guns. People are concerned about the highways of this province and the absolute lack of policing on those highways, the 400 series highways among others. People are concerned about backlogs once again in our courts that lead the courts increasingly into encouraging plea bargaining so that serious offenders, including offenders against spouses and domestic partners, are being encouraged and facilitated as they plead in to lesser and lesser offences. People are concerned in this province about a correctional system that's being privatized, not only putting correctional officers at risk but putting communities at risk. People are concerned when a minister of children's services assists Syl Apps down in Oakville in breaking the union of 140-plus trained, skilled public sector union workers there so that a privatized operation is being paid as much as \$600 a day to care for each one of their charges.

New Democrats will do everything we can to make our communities safer. We won't participate in this government's fear campaign and in its bizarre attempt to divert attention from its defaults and its defects.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Deferred votes? It's time for—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for this Legislature to direct the government to have its committee promptly inquire into the causes and reasons for the termination of the employment of the vice-president of Toronto's major hospital and to begin meeting in that regard promptly.

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre requests unanimous consent to move this motion. Do I have the consent of the House? No.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to spend some time dealing with the way you treat people, specifically men and women in our hospital sector. In the press today, you're quoted as saying that you'd be hard-pressed to recall yelling at or bullying members of the health care sector. You then admitted that you bring, and I'm quoting, "a forceful attitude" to your job. Minister, just how forceful have you been with some hospital stakeholders? Have you yelled at any? Have you, in one of your forceful attitude moments, physically intimidated someone? Has your approach always been appropriate, Minister?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have, in the days since becoming

Minister of Health, had the opportunity to engage with countless thousands of stakeholders in the health sector, and my record stands. There is, related to that, a great body of evidence from local community newspapers talking about the visits I've made to, I think, about 40 or 45 hospitals in Ontario.

I appreciate the question from the honourable member because he's trying to change his spots. It seems interesting to have a question from a gentleman who has earned a certain moniker for his time in politics, but more importantly, he served with pleasure and pride, I think, in a government that went to such an extent possible that they demeaned nurses and called them Hula Hoops.

Mr Runciman: I could be forceful, but not with my stakeholders. I didn't hear an answer to a very direct and important question.

There's a growing cloud over this minister. Good people are concerned about his approach, his efforts to intimidate, and a spreading culture of fear he is spawning in the hospital sector. We are hearing from a significant number of hospital officials that they consider your personal approach abrasive and confrontational. It's one thing to be forceful; it's quite another to be in-your-face belligerent and threatening. That's what we're hearing. That's the Smitherman approach.

Minister, your officials have expressly prohibited hospitals from being critical of your government in terms of their balanced budget plans. Why are you muzzling hospital officials and forbidding them to talk about the implications of your funding policies? Is this the open and accountable government the Liberal Party promised Ontarians just one year ago?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question by the honourable member. The fact of the matter is that Ontario hospitals are, as they always have been, free to communicate in the fashion they see fit. I had the opportunity earlier today in conversation with the media, which I think had representation from opposition parties, to make the point that I felt that if Sick Kids Hospital had, in their own right, chosen to do something related to the employment status of an employee, that was a decision they took.

Yesterday, I said very clearly and categorically that I had no involvement, that my ministry had no involvement. This has been confirmed by the chair of the board of that hospital in public comment. Even further, the dance partner of the official opposition lead critic on this item today said there was no proof.

1420

Mr Runciman: I'm glad the minister raised the dismissal of Ms DeGiusti, because that's a concern on this side of the House and is, I believe, shared by the third party in this place.

The minister attempts to indicate no involvement of his officials. What he is talking about, what he is saying, and we'd like him to be even more explicit, is, "We had nothing to do with the dismissal of Ms DeGiusti. We didn't demand it."

I ask the minister today, did anyone in your office, in your political office, including your executive assistant or

anyone in your ministry, call officials at Sick Kids expressing a concern about Ms DeGiusti's comments publicly to the Toronto Star? If that call occurred, Mr Minister, and if you take a look at this culture of fear that you've created within and without the health care sector, if that indeed proves to be the case, if someone in your office or someone in your ministry called Sick Kids expressing concern, if that becomes a public fact, will you resign?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member asked a very direct question with respect to the potential involvement of anyone in my office. He referenced my executive assistant, as an example. The answer clearly is no.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Minister, yesterday we talked about the devastating cuts you're making to the Queensway Carleton Hospital and to the Ottawa Hospital, the jobs cuts in Sault Ste Marie and Cornwall and the effects that will have on patient care at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Now we learn in a new report released this week that waiting times in Ontario under your watch are actually on the rise. Do you think that all of these cuts you're making to health care will actually reduce waiting lists or do you think cutting it will make it better?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's only the honourable member who could see \$1 billion in new investments in Ontario's hospitals as a cut. But I find it very interesting, in fact possibly desperate, to see the official opposition clinging to a report by their favourite group, the Fraser Institute, which in its very own preface to its report says, "The contents of the survey have been evaluated to the extent possible by comparing the survey results to other sources of information."

In the province of Ontario, we inherited a circumstance where the previous government did no preparatory work whatsoever to establish appropriate wait time registries. But working as we are in concert with the provinces all across the land, with Ontario in a leadership role, building on the strength of what has been done in Saskatchewan, engaging the efforts of Dr Peter Glynn, the Canadian expert on this, we will make this progress, we'll do it quickly and we'll demonstrate to Ontarians what the real situation is and what results are proving.

Mr Baird: Thank you, Minister. You can quote from the report. So can I. It says, "Among the provinces, Manitoba achieved the shortest total wait in 2004 ... with Ontario ... losing the 'best access'" record in the country. Let's look at the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order, member for Nepean-Carleton.

I hope I get the same co-operation I got from the opposition when you were answering the question. I'm not getting that. I'd like to hear the member for Nepean-Carleton put his supplementary question.

Mr Baird: Waiting lists for referral to a specialist have gone from 7.1 weeks to 8.2 weeks. Weeks waited to receive an MRI have gone down in recent years but are now on the rise by a 20% increase on your watch.

Minister, will you now not admit that your cuts to hospital funding, well below the rate of inflation, have made it intolerable for hospitals? Nurses will lose their jobs and waiting lists will continue to rise. Will you now stand in your place and admit the folly of your ways and that you have to invest more money in our public hospitals? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We are investing more money in our public hospitals, \$700 million more than your Magna budget called for. And the continued reliance of this party on the Fraser Institute, which itself is a proponent of two-tier medicine, is the very example of where that party, in government, acted and where that party, under the leadership of John Tory, stands.

Mr Baird: You have no benchmarks for which the people of Ontario can hold you accountable.

There is an alternative. You've already proven in this House that you're not prepared to invest anywhere near a major part of the money from the new health care premium in our hospitals. You've said you will not spend a dime of the old federal health money in our hospitals. But, Minister, there is a way. There is \$825 million of new funds flowing to our health care system in Ontario. What we need is that there has to be a will for there to be a way. What we seem to lack in Ontario is a Minister of Health who will stand up and advocate for our public hospitals. Of that \$825 million of new, unallocated money, will you stand in your place and say you will put a majority of those funds to work for patients in our public hospitals, and if you won't, will you step aside and let someone else do the job?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member continues to demonstrate a lack of awareness about the Ontario health care system, that it's a system and that all of its parts must, for once, be funded appropriately and function together. The member continues to rely upon hospitals because this is the legacy of their party while in government. For the first period of time, in two out of the first three years, they cut hospital funding by \$557 million, and in the last five years of their mandate, at the extraordinary expense of all other services, while the provision of doctors' services declined because they wouldn't fund an appropriate number of them, they threw all the money they had at hospitals.

The point is very clear: For two years they cut hospital funding by \$557 million. Subsequently, they made investments only for hospitals and at the expense of all other parts of the health care system. We've made an investment in the transformation of health care, moving forward with community-based investments designed to provide care for people where they need it, earlier on and not just in hospitals. There is more to a health care system than hospitals.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Nepean-Carleton. New question.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your bullying has created a climate of fear in Ontario hospitals, and it has cost the Hospital for Sick Children's child advocate, Cyndy DeGiusti, her job. Today's Toronto Star says that DeGiusti was forced out after blowing the whistle about cuts to hospital services for kids. DeGiusti was given no choice by hospital management because you and your government are pressuring the hospital to keep quiet about cuts to hospital services. Yesterday we asked you to call an emergency committee meeting to find out the details of why she was forced out. Earlier today you said it was wrong that she was forced out. Well, if you admit it's wrong, are you prepared to hold the committee meeting so we can find out the murky details of why somebody so dedicated was forced to leave her job?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's a very interesting approach that is being followed by the third party today around the Legislature of Ontario. Now we have this question by the leader of the third party that stands in rather sharp contrast to the comments of his very own critic, who said, "I have no proof that he caused the tension." The record is clear on this subject. The Sick Kids Hospital board chair has clearly said there was no involvement whatsoever from the ministry. I answered a very direct question, with respect to the involvement, by the acting legislative leader of the official opposition. More to the point, it's very clear that in the province, Ontario's hospitals are independent corporations. They make their own decisions with respect to hiring and firing and the conditions under which people operate. What I said this morning was that if they have acted at Sick Kids Hospital in response to a newspaper story, they did so on their own, and that if the decision they took was on that basis, I felt it wasn't right.

Mr Hampton: You can't fob this off on to the hospital, because as the Toronto Star correctly notes, this view that you are bullying and intimidating hospital administrators was backed up by two senior hospital administrators interviewed by the Star, both of whom asked not to mention their name. "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line," said one administrator." You know that your government issued instructions to hospitals telling them that when they issue communications about your budget strategy for hospitals, they had better not disagree, they had better toe the government line. You said earlier today that it's wrong for Cyndy DeGiusti to lose her job. What is your government going to do about it? Will you hold a committee meeting to determine why someone so dedicated was forced out after she dared criticize your government?

1430

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm very happy to repeat to the honourable member what I've said several times now, and that is what is obviously the situation at hand. Sick Kids Hospital, like about 153 other hospitals in the province, is an independent hospital corporation. They make

their own decisions. They perhaps did so—what I've said is if they made a decision because they were in some sense unsettled by the newspaper story, then I believe that they've acted wrong. I've said very, very clearly—in a media scrum earlier today that was attended by representatives of both parties—that all across Ontario, hospitals are engaged, many of them, in a very public conversation about the challenges we're working on together.

But the key point is that we are working on these things together, that we've extended to 18 months the period to get budgets into balance at the very direct request of Ontario's hospitals. We have a process that is established. It has seven points to it. We're at the very earliest stages of it, and rather than being engaged in this kind of innuendo conversation like the honourable members want, what we're involved in is rolling up our shirt sleeves and working with hospitals to get them in balance over a period of 18 months through a very well-developed process that the hospitals themselves have helped to develop.

Mr Hampton: This is indeed curious. The minister says that this person shouldn't have lost her job at Sick Kids Hospital. We've got other hospital administrators across the province saying, "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line"—the McGuinty government line.

Minister, I remember when you and Dalton McGuinty used to criticize the Conservatives for bullying and intimidation, but here is the situation: She criticizes your government on Saturday and says that this is going to result in cuts in hospital services for children. On Monday she loses her job. On Tuesday, a source says she was forced out by the hospital.

You now say it's wrong. Well, Minister, if it's wrong, will you join with us in asking the hospital to reverse the termination of this dedicated advocate for children at Sick Children's Hospital?

Hon Mr Smitherman: In exactly the same way that it would be inappropriate for me to seek the removal of an employee, it is of course not my place to get involved and to tell someone that they should rehire them.

However, I put on the public record my view—and it is the view of our government—that if Sick Kids Hospital acted as they did on their own, as the board chair has clearly said, in a fashion that was related to this story, which has not been confirmed, but if they did do that, then I've said it's my view that this isn't right, I don't condone it and that they should take appropriate action. But very, very clearly, under all the laws of the province of Ontario, it is their action to take.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: It's not just hospital administrators at Sick Kids. It's hospital administrators across this province who are afraid to speak out, and the Toronto Star correctly records that. They won't talk, and

this is particularly true in northern Ontario, where 80% of northern hospitals are forecasting they will have to make cuts this year. Four out of every five hospitals in northern Ontario will have to make cuts because you are strong-arming them without giving them proper funding. That will mean that northern Ontario residents will have to wait longer for health services and will see some of those hospital services disappear.

So I'm asking not just with respect to Cyndy DeGiusti but with respect to all of these hospitals that are now facing cuts: Will you stop your bullying and will you recognize that they can't continue with the kind of budget restrictions you're putting on them now?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would say to the honourable member that I'm working very closely with my caucus colleagues from northern Ontario. I recognize that there are particular challenges for the smallest and most rural hospitals in our province, because they have a smaller base to spread administrative costs. We're looking very carefully at this information as it flows back in at this very early stage in the process.

What needs to be repeated, because I think that some members are not necessarily understanding it well enough, is that we have a process that's been established. We've done that with Ontario's hospitals. We're going to work with them over a period of 18 months to get them in balance, because we think this is a critical advancement for the future sustainability of our health care system. There's a seven-step process that has been established. We're rolling up our sleeves and getting down to work, and we're doing this on a case-by-case basis with Ontario hospitals.

The member wants to talk about individual hospitals. I'm very pleased to take that information, and we'll do our best to resolve these situations in a fashion that is the sustainability of health care.

I would just say to the honourable member, you were part of a government that cut 8,000 hospital beds in our province. But way worse than that, you're the ones who have led to doctor shortages in the province and you should take responsibility for that action.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health says that people don't understand. I think Cyndy DeGiusti understands now. She criticizes the government and your funding cuts on Saturday, and on Monday she's told, "You're out the door." I think they all understand very clearly now. This is exactly the kind of bullying and intimidation that you used to criticize the Conservatives for.

Let me give you another example. I could give you examples from Sault Ste Marie, from Sioux Lookout, but I'll take Kapuskasing Sensenbrenner Hospital, as confirmed in the Northern Times newspaper, where they're facing a 4% budget cut on top of the budget cuts that were forced on them by the Conservatives. Hospital officials say that these cuts are going to be draconian and extremely frustrating. They will lose some services. Other hospital services people will be forced to wait longer and longer for.

Minister, this hospital wants to know, other hospitals want to know, will you stop your campaign of intimidation and bullying? Will you recognize that these hospitals can't provide the services on the budget line that you put them on?

Hon Mr Smitherman: First, I remind the honourable member that every hospital in Ontario got more money this year than last year. With respect to small hospitals, in an earlier supplementary I had an opportunity to speak to that challenge particularly.

But the honourable member, in the run-up to his question, mentioned two hospitals, Sioux Lookout hospital and Sault Area Hospital. These are both hospitals where in the course of my year in office I've had the opportunity to sit down and meet with the boards. I can assure you that those were productive meetings.

In Sioux Lookout, as an example, I'm particularly committed to the advancement of the Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre because of the work that it does with the First Nations communities. I believe that that hospital's future in the health care system in Ontario is certainly more secure than the hospitals in Sioux Lookout were under the administration of previous governments.

I'm acknowledging that we have lots of work to do here, but if we're going to have a health care system, we've got to be able to make it sustainable. That means making sure that all those non-clinical areas are operating in as efficient a manner as possible.

Mr Hampton: The member mentions Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre in Sioux Lookout. Just after you visited, I got a call from the treasurer saying, "He doesn't understand how drastically underfunded we are. He doesn't understand how many services we may lose or we may have to cut."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Now he's going to lose his job.

Mr Hampton: He can't. He's just a treasurer. He doesn't work at the hospital, so George will have trouble hatching his job.

Let's take St Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. Officials say that they have cut all they can already, but you're forcing them to cut another \$11.5 million to meet your budget line.

Then there's the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. They say they will have to cut another \$10 million—cuts that will affect the quality of care for patients.

Minister, from Kapuskasing to Hamilton to Sick Kids, hospitals are reeling from your misguided hospital funding policies. Will you stop the intimidation and the bullying and recognize that there's a serious problem here and you have to fix it now?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I know the honourable member wants to demand a resolution to this on his terms, and right now too. But the fact of the matter is that we have established a process. It's going to take place over 18 months and it's got a variety of elements to it.

On the issue that the honourable member raises about Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre, it's interesting that treasurer would have that view. But what I'm working toward

is a meeting that will take place including federal officials. Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre is particularly complex as it's the merge, if you will, between a federally funded hospital and a provincial one. I'm of the opinion that that hospital, when we are completed with our work, will stand out as a centre of excellence in the province of Ontario for aboriginal health care. I'm very, very proud of the work we're doing on that. I know the member takes a keen interest in it as it's in his riding.

What I think it makes the point about—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —is we have 154 unique hospital corporations. We're going to work through these on a case-by-case basis over a period of 18 months. None of the cuts or what have you that the member has raised have taken effect and they will not until such time as we've had a chance to review the plan.

1440

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is also to the Minister of Health. Despite your vehement denials, organizations, groups and individuals continue to tell us about your bullying behaviour, behaviour that I can tell you is creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the health sector. It gives the clear impression that any negative comments could come at a price. In fact, today we read in the Toronto Star that this view is backed up by two senior hospital executives. Indeed, one said, "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line." Minister, do you think it is appropriate behaviour for you, as a minister of the crown, to create such an atmosphere of fear and intimidation?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it interesting that a member in the same parliamentary caucus as the member from Simcoe-Grey would be there. It's interesting to note a quote of his from the legislative Hansard of October 10, 2002, "Minister Threatens to Fire Bureaucrats." Here's the quote:

"Northern Development and Mines Minister Jim Wilson says he will fire any health ministry bureaucrats who talk to opposition critics.

"It's not a threat, it's a promise," Wilson told the Legislature yesterday."

The point here is that in the course of serving in the role of Minister of Health for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: In the course of serving as Minister of Health for a year, I've had countless hundreds of opportunities to meet with thousands of health care stakeholders. I believe the member significantly misses the point about the work we're doing, and I believe the record demonstrates that.

Mrs Witmer: I think this minister needs to recognize that he's now the government, and that the atmosphere of

fear and intimidation that has been created in the health sector, particularly the hospital sector, has been created by himself. I ask you, Minister—this is a very serious question—why are there so many people in the health sector who are afraid or feel intimidated or threatened about saying anything in public that is critical of your ministry or this Liberal government for fear of retribution?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Here again the member reminds me that I am now in government because she seeks to have her record from government absented from the discussion. But I think it's helpful to put on the record that in her government's time in office, in the Ministry of Health they went to the extraordinary action of appointing nine supervisors. What is a supervisor? A supervisor is the application of the powers of nuclear weaponry by the Minister of Health. They move in and wipe out hospital boards and CEOs all at once. This is the record of that party while in government: nine times local accountability and governance gone, local leadership gone. Now they suggest that, because we're seeking to bring about change in the health care sector, we have a record that is really their record.

The fact of the matter is, we've got some difficult work to do. We're doing that hand in hand with Ontario hospitals over the next 18 months on a case-by-case basis. I believe we're going to make considerable progress for the people of Ontario.

Mrs Witmer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This minister doesn't need supervisors. He has Bill 8.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order. New question.

FIRES AT WASTE TRANSFER STATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. A fire that ignited last week at a waste transfer site still burns in Vaughan. Close to a week later, it continues to blaze, and now contaminated water from the site is flooding the streets and sewers of Vaughan.

Minister, this is Walkerton déjà vu all over again. The telltale signs of a crisis were all there. You were warned about them and did nothing. MOE has been fielding calls from local residents outraged over the mountains of illegal waste, reaching as high as 10 storeys, growing outside their window. I've also learned that there were compliance orders issued against the company for violating the amount of waste allowed on the site. With this fire and five fires that went before it in the past two months, it is clear that those orders were not followed up on. Minister, why did you not put a stop to those violations happening under your watch?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I think that it's important to correct the record that, in fact, the orders were followed up on, charges were laid, and the matter was before the court. The owner of the transfer station indicated in the court that they were in the process of removing that amount of waste that was in excess of the capacity that the certificate of

approval had allowed for. So the Ministry of the Environment had been monitoring it and was of the opinion that at least the proponent was working to become compliant.

Ms Churley: The minister allowed this illegal waste to stay there after four other fires, and you did nothing: too little, too late. You failed to act, and you caused this fire to happen as a result. The constituents of your colleague the finance minister are now paying the price for your inaction. With the cuts the finance minister has planned for your ministry, more environmental disasters are in the works, just like under the Tories. That's what happened with Walkerton.

During the campaign, the Liberals promised to protect the environment. Remember? "Choose change." But without field staff who are on the ground and ready to respond, there will be more disasters like Vaughan. Vaughan regional councillors have said that ministry staff must be available to respond in real time to prevent fires like this from recurring, but their own MPP the finance minister has ordered a further 12% cut to the MOE.

Minister, will you, as the minister responsible, stand up for your ministry and real environmental protection and demand that the Minister of Finance restore, not rescind, funding to the Ministry of the Environment?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The Ministry of the Environment was prosecuting the owner of this site in the courts, and the owner of the site indicated in court records that it was in the process of cleaning up the site. When the fire occurred—and this does happen from time to time in transfer sites—the Ministry of the Environment was there with the SWAT team to ensure that there was no further garbage being brought into the site.

Today, we are requiring the proponent, the owner of that site, to provide us with its plan to show us when they will be in compliance. We are not allowing any more waste to go to that site until the proponent, the owner, can demonstrate how they are going to comply with their certificate of approval. So I would say that this government continues to be diligent to protect the environment for the people of Ontario.

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, today you introduced legislation announcing tough new measures against indoor marijuana grow operations. This is an extremely serious issue in my riding, along with many ridings in the province of Ontario.

As a result of profitability and relatively low penalties involved, grow ops have become a thriving provincial, illegal and dangerous, industry. Indoor, mostly residential, operations allow for year-round cultivation and better protection from law enforcement agencies and poachers in neighbourhoods.

Grow ops bring criminal activity right into neighbourhoods and raise a host of community safety issues. For

example, they bypass hydro power and use it for their sources, making it structurally impossible to deal with it after the house is sold. Floor-to-ceiling ventilation systems create a very high mould problem. Concentrated fertilizers, pesticides and chemicals are carelessly stored and often disposed of in sewers across the province.

Finally, most grow operations can be linked to organized crime. Their presence in the community can result in street crimes, home invasions and dangerous booby traps for our officials. Minister, can you indicate what legislation it is hoped will come after the work we did in opposition to try to correct this problem, which wasn't done by that party?

1450

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member from Brant for his question. I think it's important to know that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and AMO are the people that really brought this to the attention of the government. They have determined, because of their experience, that this is a major, major problem in their communities. They've asked us to do something to help them stamp out what has become an epidemic. As a result of that, as a result of the Green Tide report of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, as a result of the Green Tide Summit that we hosted, we have come forward with initiatives that will address some of these concerns. That is why this is so important. And what we are going to do is address the idea of the fact that hydro is a safety issue. There are houses that are burning down as a result of gerrymandering of the wiring. It's a matter of inspectors being able, once the police have identified a house as a grow op, to go in and make sure that the degradation of that house is corrected. We're providing legislation that will allow us to seize assets that are used in a crime—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Levac: Thank you very much, Minister. I know that the organizations that we were involved with when we discussed this in opposition are extremely pleased to know. We have many, many organizations in the province, including the RCMP, the OPP and all of those law enforcement officials, that have been longing for some kind of action against these grow houses. Quite frankly, our municipalities are at wits' end in terms of how to save and protect our residents that live in these areas, including the real estate agencies that have very large difficulty in repossessing and turning these homes back into viable operations.

Minister, what other things are happening within your ministry so that we can clarify once and for all that this is not just one bill for one action, but that many, many people have participated in these particular actions and also ask us quite clearly what else we can do to help put these things down and get rid of organized crime in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Kwinter: Again I thank the member for his question. What we have is this Green Tide action group, which is made up of people like real estate agents,

insurance brokers, bankers—the people that come in and are directly impacted by the results of these crimes. Now, there are two elements. One is criminal and the other is public safety. We are determined that we will bring forward this legislation, which will give all of those people—the law enforcement officers, the utilities, all of the other people that are impacted—the necessary tools to allow them to help stamp out what has become a scourge in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Yesterday I received a copy of this Liberal propaganda disguised as a government report. This glossy brochure is nothing but a piece of partisan literature that surely breaks—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. If you continue to use that as a prop, I will go to the next question. Would you continue with your question.

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, this partisan literature surely breaks your election promise and contravenes your own proposed Bill 25. Why would you authorize the expenditure of public funds for this self-promoting partisan publication?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Let's be fairly clear with the public. I think the public expects their government to produce information indicating where they are in terms of the accomplishments and the results of the plans that they outlined in the budget. So I view this document much as I would a speech from the throne or a budget. It is simply another document to inform the public of where their government is in terms of achieving the results that were outlined in the budget. You will not find the Premier's name in there. You will find no pictures of any cabinet minister. You will find no name of any political party. It is simply a document to bring the people of Ontario up to date as to where their government is, their plans for the future and how they will achieve their objectives. I think it's frankly a good piece of public policy to inform the public that way.

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, you can spin it any way you want and you can paint any pretty picture you want, but that's a very poor illustration of the last year of Liberal government. This is nothing but a partisan piece of promotional literature. I challenge you to find one remotely negative comment about the Liberals' first year in that document. It says nothing about a punitive health tax on working families in Ontario. It says nothing about your failure to reduce insurance rates in Ontario. It says nothing about your raise in hydro rates and it says nothing about bullying hospitals.

Minister, just come clean. Just come clean today and admit that this is a Liberal feel-good document, an abuse of taxpayers' money and yet another broken promise to the people of Ontario.

Hon Mr Phillips: The public I talk to say, "Listen, we want to know the goals that you are going to achieve,

where you stand against them and the results that we should expect in the future." The public says to me, "I don't want you measuring your success by how much money you spend. I want you measuring your success by what you achieve," and that they should access the Web site to find it. I think the public expects this.

As I say, it's like a throne speech; it's like a budget. It is another important document produced by a government to outline the goals that they are going to achieve, the results—where we are to date—and what we should achieve over the next few years. I think that is what the public wants. They want the government to commit itself to results, to measure them, and they want to be told on an annual basis where they are. Rather than being angry and yelling, I think the government is taking the right step to lay out our plans, our results and the goals that we achieve. I think the public expects that and it's good public policy, as I said earlier.

PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Attorney General: Attorney General, as you know, there are no longer any outstanding charges in the Project Truth investigation into serious allegations of child abuse and sexual assault on children. There is no longer any excuse for this government to delay the calling of a commission of public inquiry into the allegations, the investigation and the prosecutions. Will you please stand today and tell this assembly, tell the people of Cornwall, tell those sexual assault victims, tell those persons charged—whose charges were withdrawn or stayed—that you will be announcing a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, with all of its powers.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): In fact, there was a finding from the court, but we are in the appeal period right now. We are determining whether or not we are going to appeal that finding, and until that happens, we are not going to speculate about any next steps. First, we will determine whether or not we are going to continue with this, whether or not we are going to appeal. We are going to review also the decision of the Court of Appeal for Ontario, wherein the court held that they wanted that trial to proceed as quickly as possible. We'll review that within the 30-day appeal period, and as soon as a decision is made, the member will be the first to know.

Mr Kormos: Attorney General, please. The court stayed proceedings against the accused, who have been before the court not just for months but for years, and the court found that the accused did not contribute to the delay.

You know full well what the likelihood is of a successful appeal of that decision by the trial judge. The people of Cornwall were promised by your leader, by Premier McGuinty when he was campaigning in April 2003 in the city of Cornwall, that there would be a public inquiry. Will you please stand and commit this govern-

ment today, here and now, to calling a full inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act upon the expiration of 30 days if an appeal is not launched? The Premier had no hesitation supporting Gary Guzzo's private member's bill calling for it. It's your turn now to keep this government's promise to those people, those victims.

Hon Mr Bryant: I appreciate that. I thank the member for the question. I'm very aware of these issues. I was a seatmate with John Cleary in opposition. I am in constant contact with Mr Brownell now, the MPP for that area, and we continue to be fully aware of that commitment. But you do know that until such time as we make a decision, assess the judgment and determine whether or not we are going to proceed with an appeal, it wouldn't be appropriate to talk about whether we would do that. You know that.

Maybe the member suggests that he has already made a judgment on this. We have not. Once we make a decision with respect to the appeal, then I'll be more than happy to let this House know and to let the member know, but we will not be rushed into making an assessment on this. We have a 30-day appeal period. We will go through the decision and proceed accordingly.

1500

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board in his capacity as the minister responsible for the Ontario Securities Commission.

Yesterday, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs presented its unanimous report to the Legislature on the securities industry in Ontario. As the minister knows, in the course of its deliberations, the committee met with industry stakeholders as well as investors, both small and large, to talk about what could be done to improve the securities environment in the province.

Now that the minister has had an opportunity to receive and review the report, can he tell the Legislature what his plans are in responding to the recommendations?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to begin by thanking the committee. It was a unanimous report supported by all three parties, and I think a very good piece of work. There are 14 recommendations in the report. I have had a chance to review them over the last 24 hours, and I would say that we're supportive of all 14 of the recommendations, perhaps with some minor variations.

I also wanted to say that I have confidence in the Ontario Securities Commission, but as with any organization, we have to constantly challenge it to get better. I believe this report provides an opportunity for improvement of the Ontario Securities Commission. So I say to the member that I plan to provide a fairly comprehensive outlook of how we're going to deal with the 14 recommendations, within the next few weeks.

Mr Milloy: The number one recommendation from the all-party committee was the unanimous endorsement of the government's call for a single securities regulator. To quote from the report, "The standing committee heard overwhelming support for the principle of a single securities regulator, and strongly supports the concept." Indeed, the lack of a single securities regulator has been called the most pressing securities issue in Ontario and across Canada.

I'd like to ask the minister what he's doing to further the cause of finding a single securities regulator for Canada.

Hon Mr Phillips: I was pleased to see the committee's recommendation strongly supporting a common or single regulator. I think the Legislature knows, but perhaps all the public don't, that we're the only country in the world without a common regulator. It is viewed as a very significant economic issue for Ontario and for Canada.

We are very much committed to pursuing it. We're having some challenge persuading the other provinces to do it. I think many of them accept that it is inevitable but need to see the model that would make it happen. So we will continue to pursue it. My view is that the way to make it happen is to flesh out a proposal that we put forward in early June, show other provinces exactly how it could work, and they, I think, could see that their concerns could be solved.

As I say, I was pleased to see that as one of the major recommendations in the report. We will continue to work on it. My own judgment is that because it's the right thing to do, it will happen, and it will happen faster if we work hard at it. That's what we plan to do.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health. Dr Rayudu Koba has been a well-respected chief of staff at the Northeast Mental Health Centre. Minister, on Wednesday, Dr Koba got up and gave a report that was highly critical of your government's delivery of mental health care services. That was on Wednesday. On Friday, Dr Koba was suspended by his board.

Is this another example of bullying and pressure tactics, or is it just another example of the environment of fear and intimidation that has reigned in the health care system on your watch?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Another coincidence.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes. This will be interesting to the honourable member.

Firstly, you got his name wrong. I've had the opportunity to meet this doctor, I think, four times. He's from the Sudbury community. There is no doubt whatsoever that this doctor is a passionate critic of the policy that your government took with respect to the organization of mental health services in northeastern Ontario. There's no doubt about it whatsoever.

The information that you provide about whether or not he's on the board any longer is news to me, but it comes as no surprise to me, as this gentleman has been a very, very passionate advocate of the Sudbury community regaining control over provision of mental health services that your government stripped away from them. I would say to you very clearly that this is a policy which I'm working on, that I'm reviewing very carefully, with participation from the honourable member for Sudbury and the honourable member for Nipissing, because we want to do a better job of coordinating the delivery of mental health services in northeastern Ontario.

Mr Baird: I say to the Minister of Health, Dr Koka may have been critical at times of the previous government, but he remained as chief of staff, supporting mental health services in Sudbury and northeastern Ontario. It was only after he came out against you, your government and your government's policies that the board suspended him.

You have said, in a very smug and arrogant way, that you've done nothing wrong, and that the environment of fear and intimidation that is so rampant among health care providers around the province has no basis in fact. This bullygate scandal continues to grow. I want to ask you a very clear and a very simple question: Will you support the call from the official opposition and the third party for public hearings on this environment of fear and intimidation?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think you know you're going to have a pretty good day in the House when they just start making stuff up. The fact of the matter is that in the rush to judgment, instead of picking up the phone and doing a little bit of research to find out that this gentleman didn't just begin to be a critic of the process, that he's been a long-standing critic of the decisions of your government, you attempt to confuse the subject.

At the heart of the policy matter at hand, we think that there may be some merit to the call he's making with respect to a view of the way we deliver mental health services in northeastern Ontario. This is a subject that I'm taking in hand, with consultation, alongside the honourable members for Nipissing and Sudbury. I believe that at the end of the day, a more appropriate public policy resolution may, in fact, meet with his approval.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about North of Superior Programs. North of Superior Programs provides mental health services, addiction counselling and integrated services for children in communities along the north shore of Lake Superior—Nipigon, Manitouwadge, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Geraldton, Longlac and Nakina. The workers there have now been on strike for quite some time. I believe we're headed into four months. The reason they've been on strike is because they've not had a pay increase in eight

years. Management offered them 0%, and then maybe 2% and 3% in the last two years.

These workers don't want to be on the picket line. They want to be providing those mental health services for children and adults, those addiction services and integrated services for children, but it's not happening. So I want to ask you, are you prepared to do anything to help settle this labour dispute so that these communities that do not have a lot of services can have these vital services returned to them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think we all express similar concern with respect to the patients that are served by this important agency. This is a matter that the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has brought to my attention previously. It is the subject of a labour disruption, and as the member would well know, there is a serious matter at hand that one should not interfere with.

But I do think it's helpful to note that, with respect to mental health, the legacy of those parties was not to fund mental health. This government, in our budget this year, made a \$25-million increase in the provision of mental health services targeted at children, the first base-funding increase for mental health agencies, as I like to say, since before Bob Rae's hair turned grey.

So I think the point of the matter here is that our government is very committed to the provision of community-based mental health service. We are concerned about this, but it is the subject of a labour disruption and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

1510

Mr Hampton: This is passing strange. When somebody at Sick Children's Hospital criticizes the government on Saturday, they lose their job on Monday. When Dr Koka, who is very respected in mental health in Sudbury, criticizes you and your ministry over mental health, he is suspended. These workers have been on strike for four months trying to gain just a fair collective agreement so that they can provide the mental health services people need, and your answer is, oh, you can't get involved. Very passing strange.

If you criticize the government, you lose your job. If you go out and try to demonstrate you're not being treated fairly, the Minister of Health can't get involved. Very strange. You criticize the government, you lose your job. If you go out and try to bargain decent services and a decent contract, oh, the government can't get involved. Maybe you can tell us, when do you get involved, Minister? Only when you're firing people or only when you're telling hospital boards, "Don't criticize us"?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think what's very clear by the honourable member's very question is one element of consistency, and that is, no evidence or proof whatsoever of any involvement on the part of myself, my staff or my ministry in any of these situations that he so desperately tries to link.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Yesterday the member from Timmins-James Bay had a press conference regarding Bill 106, which seeks an amendment to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. Mr Bisson claims this amendment will cause mill closures, layoffs and the creation of supermills. Minister, will this amendment harm northern Ontario's forestry industry?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member from Sault Ste Marie for the question, to clarify obviously a misunderstanding where the member from Timmins-James Bay has got it wrong again here in the House. I know that in the last session he was puzzled by the number of lines an angler had in his boat, and I had to explain that to him in the House. In this case, he confuses what the act refers to as facility licences, and that is the sawmills, and the timber licences, which is of course the wood supply.

There's nothing in that amendment that is going to affect my ability at all, whatsoever, to issue timber licences to companies. In fact, the member knows that from the authority I have in the act, and that I've done this already in northern Ontario, which we can talk about in the supplementary. We're going to do everything we can with the authority we have in this act to make sure we have strong and prosperous communities in northern Ontario.

Mr Oraziotti: Many northern Ontarians are worried they'll find themselves out of a job because of this amendment. Northern Ontario cannot afford to lose any more jobs. Can you reassure the people of northern Ontario that this amendment will not result in job loss for those working in the lumber industry?

Hon Mr Ramsay: Again I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste Marie, who I know is very concerned about the northern economy. I appreciate his effort to bring clarity to this question in the House today.

I think the other thing the member misunderstands—unfortunately, in his press conference in Timmins yesterday, he has really started to fearmonger among workers in our sawmills—is that he's made the workers believe that, somehow, wood supply is directly tied to communities and to mills. Of course that is not the case. The minister always has the authority to direct the wood supply to any mill he or she sees fit. The leader of the third party would certainly know that, because he knows that earlier this year I redirected some wood from the Dryden area to the Ear Falls area, working with the company and the communities to make sure we had a sustainable mill in both communities. The community signed off on that, and now we have permanent, strong jobs in those communities.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and

Correctional Services. Minister, this morning you announced new legislation to crack down on marijuana grow operations. As I said in my comments, it was yet another zero-dollar announcement for law and order in this province.

It's clear we need more police to combat grow operations, we need more police to fight gang violence, we need more police to stop Internet luring of innocent children and we need more police to battle global identity theft.

Your government has increased spending this year by over \$5.1 billion over last year's budget. Minister, exactly when are we going to see even one of the 1,000 new police officers you promised in the last provincial election?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I find it interesting that the member opposite uses my statement to make that statement but won't make a statement whether he supports what we're doing about marijuana growers. That's an initiative of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and it's been called for by AMO.

But to answer your question, I'm on the record—we've said it all along—that we will fulfill that 1,000-police-officer promise during our mandate. What I would suggest to you, rather than throwing that out every time there's an issue, is to deal with the issues that we're dealing with so we know where you stand. That's what I'd suggest that you do.

PETITIONS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

It has been signed by over 150 of my constituents, mostly from the Drayton area, and needless to say, I have affixed my signature and I'm in full support of this petition.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Parkdale—Davenport.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that. Your memory goes back a long way. Great.

I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St Clair Avenue West to study potential transit improvements, including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

"Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

"Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to the local streets;

"Whereas safety must be a high priority for any alternative selected and, according to the ambulance and fire department staff, they don't like to work with right-of-ways;

"Whereas a right-of-way would lead to the reduction or elimination of on-street parking on St Clair Avenue West;

"Whereas traffic bottlenecks at certain intersections and underpasses are already terrible, and certain chronically problematic intersections and underpasses could not stand to lose any one of the existing two lanes;

"Whereas there is no guarantee that a dedicated right-of-way will improve transit service substantially, as the number of streetcars serving the street will actually be reduced;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community."

Since I'm in agreement with this, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

1520

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourist economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers should not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers, the trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector..."

I sign and support this petition on their behalf.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan that concludes:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition was presented to me by the Bayview North Family Chiropractic Clinic in Richmond Hill and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned"—and there are literally hundreds of signatures—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and hand this to the page from Oak Ridges, Gabriella Silano.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of grants for Ontario students. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These petitions come from the Caledonia Fair and are signed primarily by cattlemen in Haldimand county. It's titled,

"Halt Edwards Lake Landfill (Certificate of Disapproval).

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the planned Edwards Lake landfill on Brooks Road, Cayuga, two miles (three kilometres) east of the Grand River, is to be 15 acres (six hectares) excavated 29 feet (nine metres) deep in an area of wetland/slough forest; and

"Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act—as of June 17, 2004—redefines the word 'lake' and prohibits any excavation into the water table for landfill larger than 2.5 acres (1 hectare);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To issue a certificate of disapproval to halt Edwards Lake landfill excavation."

I agree with the cattlemen and I affix my signature to this.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that begins:

"Whereas since Bill 99 was passed in 1997 by the Harris government, the situation for injured workers with respect to income, recognition of their injuries by the compensation system, treatment by the employer and opportunities for re-employment has dramatically deteriorated..."

It goes on to say after the whereases that:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the provincial government to immediately:

"Change the name of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board back to the Workers' Compensation Board;

"Implement full cost-of-living protection for injured workers;

"Establish full coverage for all workers and all work-related disabilities and diseases under the compensation system;

"Abolish experience rating which encourages employers to, and rewards them for, hiding occupational injury and illness by giving them money back from their premiums;

"Enforce health and safety in the workplace by hiring more inspectors and sending them to workplaces without giving advanced notice to the employer;

"Enforce employer re-employment obligations and abolish provisions which deem workers to be receiving wages from jobs they don't have;

"Conduct a complete review of the workers' compensation system in order to write new legislation which ensures fundamental benefits and rights for workers, including survivors of workers killed on the job, as called for in the CAW Jobs and Full Compensation platform."

I have signed this petition.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access

to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001, and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and, in August, the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition from NASK, the area that Mr Bradley represents, the anaphylactic organization there.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students"—my bill—"which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name wholeheartedly to this petition and ask for us to continue the fight.

1530

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by John Bessey and others from Fort Erie, Ontario, that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget could increase taxes on working families by an average of \$1,200; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he would not raise taxes by one penny on working families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should cancel any plans to increase taxes and, if they still plan on raising taxes, hold a referendum according to a law that Premier McGuinty himself voted for."

In support, my signature.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increased student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario; increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average; and implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for all Ontario full-time and part-time students."

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have several thousand more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario will adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents in northern Ontario communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited, politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 16, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm very happy to rise in support of Bill 82 today. What this bill, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act—or, as I like to call it, the Declaring a Truce with Teachers Act—is about is removing an ineffective irritant that created a poisoned atmosphere in the education system, and paving the way for the development of a plan that will actually work, because the most ridiculous thing about the PLP was that it wasn't working. Teachers weren't signing up, because it wasn't working.

I want to just talk a little bit about my own experience. My first child started school in 1984, and my third child graduated in 2002. So between 1984 and 2002 I had an opportunity, as a parent and as an activist and as a school trustee, to watch what was happening in the school system. I can tell you that, after 1995 and into the reign of the previous government, what started to happen in public education was an atmosphere of toxicity and real hostility.

One of my concerns is that young parents putting their children in public school today, or certainly before we were elected last year, may have gotten a sense that that was the norm, that the hostility between teachers and government was the norm. In fact, that should not be the case, and what we're trying to do with Bill 82 is move toward a period of peace and stability with teachers.

This piece of legislation is important in that it signals a willingness on the part of this government to work with teachers rather than to score points at their expense, and to work in the interests of students. Minister Kennedy

encapsulated it when he addressed the House on May 13. He said, "Our policy is one of respect for teachers as professionals, individuals who conduct themselves in a manner that deserves the public trust. Every Ontario student needs and deserves highly trained and highly motivated people at the front of their classes."

We completely understand that teachers need opportunities for professional development. What the learning program that was put in place by the previous government assumed was that teachers weren't responsible. It assumed that teachers would not engage in professional development. It assumed that teachers were not capable of designing their own plans and taking those courses that they needed. We reject those assumptions. We know that teachers are capable of doing that. We know that teachers can work with us to create a better plan.

This approach of respect comes out of the knowledge that thousands of teachers expressed their concerns with the professional learning program. This change also shows a willingness to listen to teachers' concerns and to work with them to achieve the best results for Ontario's students. As I said, from my perspective as a school trustee, what I saw was an unhappy workforce—increasingly unhappy as teachers struggled to deal with this punitive plan that was imposed upon them. We know that the mood, the environment in the classroom that's created by the demeanour of the teacher, is incredibly important to the learning environment of students, and that students will do better if teachers feel that they are in an environment that supports them. What we're trying to do is create that environment.

Mr Speaker, just before I conclude, I want to say I'm going to share my time with Mr Qaadri, the member from Etobicoke North, but I want to make a couple of more points before he takes over.

As part of this change, on June 19 Minister Kennedy released to the education partnership table a discussion paper on teacher excellence. That discussion paper talks about a number of initiatives that might replace the professional learning program, because what we've said is, "This isn't working and we need to look at some other options for what might work." These are the things that are being discussed with the teachers, with administrators, with the education sector. We're looking at mentoring programs for new teachers. We're looking at the possibility of an induction year, professional development days and enhanced summer programs. In fact, this past summer more than 7,500 teachers signed up and went back to school for training and reading and math instruction, to be able to serve as teachers for literacy and numeracy this fall.

The proof is in the pudding that there are many, many ways to work with the sector, to come up with a better plan that will work, so that our young teachers don't leave, because that's the other thing that's happening: Young teachers are leaving the profession. We can't afford to have that happen. So I am very happy to support this legislation. It paves the way for a very much improved era in public education in Ontario.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to speak in support of this particular piece of legislation, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act. I'd like to follow in the footsteps set by my colleague, the MPP from Don Valley West, as she renamed this particular act. I would like to designate it the Harmony with Teachers Act.

I'm reminded of a famous book, subsequently made into a movie, about a very important teacher, a teacher who had a lasting influence on the lives of the young girls who were entrusted to her. The movie, you'll recall, was *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. There was a famous saying in that particular movie. She said to her students on the first day, "I am putting new heads on your young shoulders, and all my pupils will be the crème de la crème."

1540

I think that aspiration is what we in the government of Ontario would like to empower and equip our educational system with. We on the government side—unlike, for example, the MPP from Oak Ridges, as he clearly demonstrated in his most recent leadership bid—believe that education in Ontario is a great moral enterprise, not to be made a profit centre. We would like to foster both partnership and harmony in the educational sector, not, for example, I'll remind this House and the people of Ontario, the idea of creating a crisis, which is what a previous Minister of Education in the former government did. We are striving to create an atmosphere, a work environment, fostering excellence and professional development.

Precisely what are we referring to in this particular act? First of all, it's the result of broad consultation with the educational communities. They themselves have called the former piece of legislation "hugely flawed" and a "punitive approach," a punishment from the former government. I think it's well known that the educational sector, amongst others, was targeted by the previous government. The premise was always one of threat. For example, in this particular piece of legislation, teachers are told they will have to take a number of courses over a given period of time; otherwise, their licensing body will be instructed by the government to remove their teaching privileges and their certification. This is an enforced rule which actually overrode the college of teachers' own recommendation. As my colleague has mentioned, this particular program has had minimal enrolment, minimal success and minimal impact and uptake. To boot, the entire program is nevertheless still paid for by the teachers themselves.

As you'll recall, the teachers of Ontario greeted a then-Minister of Education with tomatoes at a particular event. Perhaps they were speaking and maybe demonstrating on behalf of a lot of people in Ontario who believe that public education is a moral trust and deserves our best efforts and best practices. As a case in point, 48 work stoppages—strikes, if you will—were organized across Ontario under the previous regime in the eight years of the Harris-Eves government. It led to the discouragement of an entire profession.

In its place, we in this government are going to be bringing back harmonized, continuous learning—as my colleague has mentioned, mentoring programs, professional development days, and summer programs as well.

To return to that quotation about putting new heads on young shoulders and all the pupils will become the *crème de la crème*, we in this government want to work with the educational communities to empower, encourage and equip our teachers to accomplish just that goal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to stand up to say that I'm going to be doing my lead this afternoon, for those who might be watching and are interested in what the New Democrats have to say. I will be commenting on what the Liberal members who have previously spoken have had to say. I've got to say, I agree with pretty well much of what they say and will have more to say on that, and things they haven't spoken about. I will establish a connection between what they are doing and what they ought to be doing in other areas.

Again, simply to argue that in a little while, after the Tories speak, Marchese's on to do his lead, and I just want to inform people of that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Lots of time.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today and join the members from Don Valley West and Etobicoke North. I really did appreciate their comments on Bill 82.

This bill, if passed as proposed, I think will go a long way to mending the awful shape we found ourselves in with the relationship between the provincial government—the Minister of Education—and the professional teachers in this province. During the last election, it was one of the major issues. It was something people asked us to address because they know how important schools are, not only to their own community but to the future of the students, their own education and to the economy of our province as it moves ahead.

There has been a lot of turmoil under the previous government. It's time to put all that behind us. This bill, I believe, goes a long way toward doing that. If you look at the turmoil they've experienced, what we would like to see is some peace and stability in the system so we can start to implement some of the proposals we plan to implement to improve public education in this province.

When you look at some of the things that were done during the term of the previous government, it doesn't surprise you that things need to be fixed. Private school funding was increased by \$3,500 per student, while for those children who were in public education, funding was decreased by almost \$1,300 per student.

Not any of the tests has achieved the desired results. If you look at the results—grade 3, grade 6, grade 9—there is simply no improvement there to speak of. When you consider the amount of money that was spent—previous governments spent almost \$400 million of taxpayers' dollars—to fire teachers and other employment workers,

this goes a long way to restoring the type of relationship that should exist between the provincial government and those people who teach our children.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise to take part in the debate on Bill 82 and comment on the speeches from the members from Etobicoke North and Don Valley West. It is my pleasure to be here today.

I had an opportunity in the previous government to sit for about 18 months as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. I can tell you that it was really, truly, a very enjoyable time in my time here at Queen's Park, because I was able to visit schools from across the province and get to talk to a lot of teachers, parents, school councils and children, who are the future of our province.

In my time, I was always inspired by the spirit in the classroom and the spirit in the schools. The only time I heard a lot of negative things about teaching and about the teachers' relationship with government was in this particular place right here, where this government continually hammered away at everything we had done, as the previous government. That's how, of course, they gained a lot of support. They went out to all the teachers' federations, and most of them supported the government in the last election. Now they owe a lot back. They owe a lot back for the hard work the teachers did in all the election campaigns, and a lot of that involves funding of education.

I know that in my riding they promised over a \$1,000 increase per student for both school boards. They brought out this chart during the election campaign that said, "We need \$1,000 more to compete with other school boards in the province." I'm looking forward to that. I'm looking forward to Mr Kennedy and Mr Sorbara coming forward with that type of funding increase. Apparently it was justified somehow. We always thought the funding formula was fair, but Mr Kennedy thought it was wrong. We look forward to the two Simcoe county school boards receiving up to a \$1,000 increase in funding in this term in government.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'd like to take this opportunity in a short time just to explain that I was the victim of one of these silly PLP plans. Just after I was elected, and still a member of my board, I got a letter from this organization that said I had two months to complete a PLP plan, all the 14 courses. The ridiculousness of this whole plan and how it applied not only insulted me as a professional, but it insulted me in terms of the way it was applied across the province. I had to apply for a six-week extension in order to apply for a further extension so that I could fulfill this PLP while I was the MPP for Brant.

Having said that, I could tell you a story as long as my arm about this type of professional development this government foisted on the teachers of Ontario. The characterization of the member across there is just laughable, to say that his best friend is a teacher and all this kind of stuff. It's just mumbo-jumbo. That government did nothing but destroy a profession psychologically, spiritually and any other way you can say it. They took joy in

the fact that they took on the teachers and basically brought them to heel. That is gone.

We're no longer going to deal with that. We're going to deal with teachers as professionals, and we're going to deal with teachers in terms of our knowledge that they are extremely professional people. They learn on a regular, daily basis. They spend personal time educating themselves to do a better job in the classroom. Thank God they're that professional that they were able to survive those years when that government applied their pressures and their draconian way of trying to improve a profession. It's amazing to think that that government would sit there and beat teachers so badly and then turn around and say, "But we want you to do a good job with those students." It doesn't make sense to me. Thank God we've got a profession that knows how to live well beyond what they did to them over the last eight years.

1550

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms Wynne: I thank the members for Trinity-Spadina, Oakville, Simcoe North and Brant for their comments.

I want to follow up on something that the member for Simcoe North said and just comment that we as a government, we as a Legislature, owe a lot to the students of this province. We owe a lot to the public of this province. That's exactly true. That's because they're depending on us. They're depending on us to deliver public education, because without a solid public education system our democracy doesn't flourish and our economy doesn't flourish. We exist, we're here, in order to support those things.

I think the move in this bill acknowledges that already 85% of teachers in this province engage in professional development anyway. That's what was so ludicrous about the PLP, that it was solving a problem that didn't exist. In doing so, it created a problem. What we're trying to do is unravel that nonsense and work with the sector so that we can put in place a plan that actually will work, that will help people to stay in the profession, because it will establish an environment of respect and we won't lose young teachers. More importantly, we'll attract to education the teachers that we need. We need the smartest, best people in this province. We've got really excellent teachers in the classroom. We need to attract more of those people, and we need to keep them in the system. That's what this bill is about.

My colleague from Trinity-Spadina, I'm not surprised that he's supportive of this bill. I've heard him speak many, many times in support of public education, and I hope that indicates that he and his caucus will be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. Obviously, we have somewhat of a different view of this legislation than members of the government. Over the next few minutes, I'll attempt to set the record straight, first of all, about what the result of

this legislation will be and what, in fact, was in place previously.

It's interesting, when I look at this bill—and I'm sure you've read it, Speaker—there is not a whole lot to this bill; basically three pages. But what is interesting, as I read through this bill, is that the explanatory note, in one sense, really tells it all. It reads as follows:

"The bill repeals part III.1 of the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 which provides for a professional learning committee and sets out professional learning requirements for members of the college. The bill also makes complementary amendments to other provisions of the act."

Here's what's very interesting: This bill does, in fact, do precisely what the objective indicated here is; that is, it repeals the provisions for a professional learning committee and those aspects that set out professional learning requirements for teachers in this province.

When you read through the actual legislation—I have never seen the word "repeal" more often than in this piece of legislation. One would have thought that, if anything, what this government would do—if in fact they want to come alongside teachers and help them to become the best they can possibly be, to improve their professional qualifications and to ensure that we have the most qualified people in our classrooms—with all of its professing of wanting to support education in the province, wanting to support teachers, would be to have a positive piece of legislation that says, "Here's what we will do."

Instead, it refers in the first paragraph to a number of provisions of the previous act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, and it will be repealed. "Paragraph 6 of subsection 3(1)" etc "is amended by striking out 'including professional learning required to maintain certificates of qualification and registration.'" Section 3: "Schedule B, section 3, is amended by striking out"—and it goes on and on.

Every single paragraph of this bill is not talking about positive things that this government is prepared to do to support teachers in our classrooms but rather takes away something that was intended to support teachers and their professionalism within our classrooms.

No one believes more strongly than I do that the teaching profession is probably the highest calling of any profession within our society. Teachers spend, in many cases, unfortunately, almost more time with children than their parents do, certainly their waking hours, in terms of their formative years and establishing foundations they will then use that we all have relied on to build our careers.

What is important is that teachers are given the appropriate tools and resources so they can in fact become the best they can possibly be. That was the objective of this bill that is now being dismantled. I believe that this government will live not long—about three years, I predict—but over that short period of time I believe that they too will come to regret this day, this bill, the actions they're taking to unwind the professional support network and a

system of professional improvement that this bill provided.

We responded to the call from across this province—from educators, from parents, from those who understood the importance of ensuring that we have the best possible teachers in our classrooms. That's why we brought into this Legislature the Ontario College of Teachers Act in 1996. We brought it forward to this Legislature for the purpose of ensuring that there was a formal structure within this province so that teachers could access ongoing education and so that we could bring excellence into the classroom.

I don't believe there's anyone in this Legislature who would disagree that it is important that teachers have every opportunity to improve their knowledge, that they be given the most up-to-date information in terms of what will allow them to better meet the needs of classrooms. The Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, requires all members of the Ontario College of Teachers to complete 14 approved credit courses—seven core and seven elective. That is structured over a five-year period of time. It was structured in such a way that, yes, it was mandatory. Those initiatives of ongoing education would be an absolute requirement by our teaching profession in order to maintain their teaching certificate. Speaker, I don't know about you, but there are not any professions I know of that don't require ongoing mandatory updating and ongoing learning.

1600

Interjection.

Mr Klees: There's a member here who quips behind me, who is a medical doctor. I can tell you, if medical doctors in our province didn't require some ongoing professional updating, I would hesitate to recommend to anyone to walk into his office. But I know he does that and he's a strong proponent of ongoing professional development for the medical profession. Why would we deny the teaching profession in our province those same important professional standards? That's what the bill this government is now unravelling intends to do.

The categories of core areas for this ongoing instruction were curriculum knowledge, student assessment, special education, teaching strategies, classroom management, leadership, use of technology, and communication with parents and students. These are all vital elements to a successful teaching career, and I believe that every teacher in this province who is truly committed to his or her profession understands as well the importance of this kind of ongoing professional development.

Members refer to the fact that we somehow have failed in the implementation of this program, but it was intentionally put forward in such a way that it would be, in fact, overseen by the profession itself in a self-regulatory way, and that it would be supportive. We knew from the very beginning the only way this program would be successful was if, in fact, teachers participated in it.

I hear from the previous member, who said, "It really didn't work. It didn't work because teachers didn't enrol

in it." I hate to say, but I think it's important for the record to say, that the reason teachers did not enrol in this program is that we have evidence they were instructed not to. They were instructed by their union leaders not to participate in this program because there was some self-fulfilling prophecy at play here, that they were going to determine this would not achieve its objective. That's highly unfortunate, because I believe it's parents who would be, and were extremely supportive of this initiative. Students would benefit from it, and teachers, of course, would benefit as well.

The college committee, the professional learning committee, approved the courses and provided the professional learning. Each course in the professional learning program has an assessment component to verify the knowledge and skills a teacher is required to have. The Ontario College of Teachers and its subcommittee, the professional learning committee, both have significant numbers of teachers in their makeup.

With regard to the issue of the makeup of the Ontario College of Teachers, I want to speak to that just briefly. I believe it's extremely important that there is a very objective assessment of the qualifications of our professionals in the teaching profession. To say that this body is not self-governing and professional in nature is not to understand or respect the real purpose of the Ontario College of Teachers. That purpose is to serve the public interest, and not the teachers' interest, not the boards' interest, and certainly not the government's interest.

Bill 82 highlights that this government shows no consideration for any of the education stakeholders' interests, I venture to say. Bill 82 removes all formal and accountable tracking of a teacher's professional development. If a teacher so chooses, he or she won't be obligated to keep his or her skills updated. That was a large part of the original intent of the bill we had introduced in this House, that not only would there be requirements for the ongoing education and very prescribed curriculum, but there would also be, then, the mandatory tracking of that progress.

I heard previous members refer to their title that they would ascribe to this bill. I have my own, and what I see this as is really the act that could be entitled the Selling Out to Union Bosses Act by this government. That's how I see it.

We know, in the previous campaign, the election campaign we were involved in, the number of times we heard the then leader of the Liberal Party—now the Premier thanks in large part, and I don't think there's a teacher I've spoken to who doesn't support this, to the teachers, who played a major role in the election of this government.

Over the next few months and years, I believe what's going to happen is that those same teachers who put their trust in this Premier and in this political party are going to regret the day they ever did that, because as with other promises that were made, teachers are going to understand that promises to them too will be broken, and it won't be long.

This is one, quite frankly, that this Premier has kept. He promised to dismantle the important legislation we have here. He made that commitment. I have no doubt it was a quid pro quo: "I will eliminate teacher testing if you support me in this election." That was a deal that was made, and for this he is no doubt being applauded by some.

What happens beyond that, we have yet to see. I'd like to speak to the importance of quality of education. Our students will only be competitive when they graduate from our education system if in fact their educational standards are competitive, not within Ontario but within Canada and internationally. That's all about standards. We can have curriculum standards, but I've said many times that if we do not have a qualified front-line teaching profession who are, in turn, the best qualified of anywhere, then our students won't have the level of excellence in education we want them to have.

So for that reason, I remind members of the Legislature that this was the reason we introduced this important step, for the province of Ontario to have mandatory teacher testing, not from the standpoint of holding them accountable, but from the standpoint of putting in place a structure within which all of these supporting tools could be provided, all of these elements of training and support and the tools we know our teachers need to become the best could be managed and improved on, and to help our teachers achieve the professional level they were attempting to achieve. What we have here, in one fell swoop in three pages of this legislation, is the erosion of that.

1610

I want to address as well the issue of the College of Teachers. This all goes to whether or not standards in education in this province will be set according to what is right academically or what is simply driven through a skewed process. The Minister of Education—I'm reading here from a magazine that I know you read probably monthly, professionally speaking. The Minister of Education was speaking to the College of Teachers, and he said, "The college though—I want to be very clear—exists for one reason.... It's not for teacher interest. It can't be. It is a delegation of authority and responsibility from the government for the public interest. Only a select number of professions are capable of sustaining that." In that, I agree with him.

Then he goes on to talk about how he would go about appointing members to the college, this important body that oversees professional standards of the industry, and he makes the point throughout this interview that the college should not be a place where partisan politics are played out. He says, "We are not going to pick partisans that support the government of the day. Nor are we picking people that represent discernibly any kind of caucus. There will be people who care about education, who are supportive of teachers and who understand the public interest when it comes to making sure that teachers are regulated fairly."

Who can argue with that? I know, Speaker, that you wouldn't. But this comes from a government that, on the

one hand, purports to be lily-white in terms of this education portfolio. This comes from a minister who didn't have to but who made a point of going on record as saying, "We will not appoint people to the College of Teachers who are partisan in any way."

Interestingly enough, I think this was actually the first appointment he made, and I refer you to the standing committee on government agencies, September 29. This was an individual who was going through the hearing process for appointment to the College of Teachers. Her name is Anne-Marie Levesque. On page A-206, Mr Tascona, who's doing the interview, says to Ms Levesque, "Have you ever donated to the Liberal Party?" The response from Ms Levesque was, "Yes, I have."

"Mr Tascona: The provincial Liberal Party?"

"Ms Levesque: Yes."

"Mr Tascona: Are you a member of the provincial Liberal Party?"

"Ms Levesque: Yes, I am. I can tell you that, even when I was in Alberta, I was a member of the Liberal Party and I cheered for the Montreal Alouettes and I cheered for the Montreal Canadiens."

I'm not sure what that has to do with appointment to the college.

Mr Tascona goes on to ask how she came to know about this.

She makes it very clear that she got to know about it from her MPP, who happens to be a Liberal. So much for the non-partisanship of the appointment to the College of Teachers.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We're not prejudiced. We can appoint Liberals too.

Mr Klees: Now all of a sudden the members are waking up and realizing—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): That's what we're doing. Right on.

Mr Klees: Well, here's the point: Very simply, this act that we have before us here today is politically driven. It is driven from a partisan position. It was a commitment and a payoff for promises that were made to the teachers' unions during the election campaign, and now this government is compromising quality education in the classroom for political and partisan gain. That is what this is all about, and this government will live to regret that. It's a waste of time, expertise and money that has now just started to gain some momentum. The organization has been put in place province-wide. Teachers had the opportunity to gain from this opportunity of professional development, and now, with one three-page piece of legislation, this government is prepared to unravel all of that. The hundreds of thousands of dollars that have gone into building this structure are now being wasted by this government for no reason.

Parents across Ontario made it very clear that they don't support this initiative of this government. Do we want peace in education? Do we want motivated front-line teachers? Of course we do. We want to do everything possible to ensure that our teachers have the necessary tools and are equipped to be the best teachers

anywhere—internationally—for the benefit of our students. But this is not the way to do it.

I want to make another point on the issue of quality education. Not only is it important that our teachers are highly trained and have the best in technology and the best support in the classrooms; it is also important that they have the support of the government for doing their work. Support doesn't mean that you sell out. It doesn't mean that every time a union comes to you and says, "This is what we want," you simply hand it over. We have a responsibility as government to do what is in the public interest, not what is in the self-interest of any individual person or profession or union.

Interjections.

Mr Klees: Once again, I hear the carping from the opposite side. I hear the carping from the government members. We're touching a nerve here. The nerve we're touching is that they know they sold out on this. As parents, every one of you members knows that it's important that the teachers who are teaching your children have the best education and the best qualifications, and they will not have it if you don't provide the appropriate structure for them to have that. We had it in place. This legislation is now unravelling all that, and I believe that parents will react. They will let you know, in no uncertain terms, that they don't appreciate your selling out the quality of education in this province by taking away the one structure, which had been put in place after many years, that would ensure that our teachers have the kind of professional support they so much deserve.

I want to mention as well, Speaker, that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Durham. I didn't mention that before, but I'm going to do that now. I know, particularly with his background in education, that he has a great deal that he wants to add to this debate, and he will.

I want to talk about class size for a minute. An important cornerstone of education reform for the self-appointed education Premier, as Dalton McGuinty would refer to himself, was the capping of class sizes. You'll remember that promise, Speaker: an absolute hard cap of 20 children per class from junior kindergarten to grade 3. It's very interesting that the Premier and the Minister of Education, in the first week of September, called a press conference—a great photo op—to announce that some 1,300 schools across the province had achieved some form of that lower class size. Here's what is interesting about that, and it goes to the heart of how this government does business: It's all about show; it's all about photo ops.

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The Premier and the Minister of Education know full well that the final enrolment figures don't come in to the Ministry of Education and aren't established until October; in fact, it's the end of October. So the numbers they were broadcasting in the first week of September are not real numbers at all. But they also took the time to print those numbers and to boast of their achievement in this most recent document that they put out, at a cost of

literally thousands of dollars, to represent—I should say "misrepresent," if I can say that with your permission, Speaker—to misrepresent what they have done in education, and that is to achieve lower class sizes. Had they waited until the final enrolment figures were in at the end of October, they would never have been able to make that claim, because we're getting calls now and I'm getting calls every day from parents across this province and schools in every region of our province that kindergarten, junior kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 have 28 kids, 31 kids. That doesn't sound like a hard cap of 20 to me. Does that sound like a hard cap to you? No. And it isn't.

Mr Marchese: No. What's going on?

Mr Klees: I'll tell you what's going on. This Minister of Education, this Premier, the so-called education Premier, is playing fast and loose with political spin so that they can somehow pretend that they are meeting those objectives. They're not. But here's my point on the issue of class sizes: They are supporting, with multi-millions of new dollars, this hard cap policy that they say is going to lead to higher quality education in the classrooms. I believe that every parent in this province will agree with us when we say that much more important than whether there are three or four more children in a class is the qualification and the motivation and the excellence of the teaching that takes place in that class. That's why we believe very strongly—

Interjection.

Mr Klees: I'm not going to be supporting this legislation, if you've drawn that conclusion. And the reason for that is that I don't believe this is in the public interest. I do not believe it's in the interests of the teaching profession or the parents or the children. I believe that this government, having sold out to the teachers' unions in the course of their election campaign, is now, unfortunately, willing to compromise the quality of education and is taking away the tools and the support system that we had put in place for the teaching profession in this province. That, I believe, this government will live to regret.

As I said before, they have three years left. At the end of that time, the commitment we will make is that we will work with the teaching profession to ensure that there is in place in this province a system—a professional, ongoing education for teachers—that will be a mandatory requirement and that will serve not only the teaching profession well but also parents and students well.

I believe that what this government should be doing is looking very carefully at what is undermining the quality of teaching in this province. What it is, I say to the member opposite, is a circumstance that I have referred to often as the Achilles heel of education in this province. This government does not have the courage to do anything about that, and that has to do with how teachers in our province negotiate their contracts. What I believe is important is that we avoid what should never again happen in this province: that students miss out on one day of teaching in their classrooms because of a teachers' strike.

Teachers, professionals in this province, should not have to strike. It's time that we move beyond this industrial model of resolving contract disputes in the teaching profession to a professional system of arbitration, no different from what nurses and doctors and firefighters and police officers have. I believe the very essential service that our teachers are providing in our classrooms across this province should be recognized with the same degree of professionalism as those other services. Whether it be a police service, a firefighting service or a service that is being provided by our doctors or nurses, the teachers of our province should be put on the same professional level so that that same process should be followed for the teaching profession.

Out of respect for the teaching profession, I call on this government to have the courage to put in place that kind of contract resolution. You know why they won't do it? They won't do it for the same reason that they've introduced this piece of legislation today: because they've sold out to the teachers' unions—not the front-line teachers. I can tell you, every front-line teacher whom I have spoken to about the issue of teachers' strikes tells me they don't want to strike. They would much rather have a system that the doctors and nurses have and that police officers and firefighters have. They don't want to go out on a sidewalk with a picket.

So I call on this government to take that step. That's a piece of legislation that they should bring here to the House. And I'll tell you what: I'll support it, because that's doing the right thing not only for teachers; that's doing the right thing for students and for parents. In the final analysis, that is what it will take, I believe, to truly move our teaching profession forward and to build the kind of respect and, as the previous speaker to this bill indicated, bring peace to education. Here's what I will predict: Given the kind of settlement this government has offered to medical doctors, and given what we know about what's been set aside for teachers in this province—namely, 2% and 2% and 2%—there isn't a teachers' union that's going to agree to a 2% settlement.

You folks are on your way to a great deal of difficulty in the teaching profession. You're on your way to teachers' strikes right across this province, and then we want to talk about quality of education. You are not going to be able to keep your promises to the teachers' unions, and you should not have kept it with this piece of legislation that is dismantling professional development for teachers in this province. This is precisely the kind of compromise and the kind of selling out to the teachers' unions that this Premier will regret.

With that, I defer to my colleague from Durham. Thank you.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Continuing the debate on Bill 82, I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a real pleasure to follow someone of the stature of the member for Oak Ridges, whom I have the greatest respect for. I commend

him for his representation of core values when it came to his leadership campaign. I think he impressed many people throughout the province, many of whom are in my riding.

He now serves as the education critic in the John Tory party. I can tell you there was considerable reflection by our leader, John Tory, in the placement of the critics. Education, as the member for Oak Ridges has clearly pointed out, is stated to be one of the cornerstone promises of the Dalton McGuinty government: the recovery of this system which is so important to all of us. Public education is very critical. It's a cornerstone to each one of us.

As usual, I would like to start by saying how it affects John O'Toole and his constituents in the riding of Durham. It affects me very personally. I can hardly think of the educational experience without thinking how it affects me to this extent, Mr Speaker—and I know your wife is a teacher of some respect; I've met her and just can tell by her demeanour with your own children.

I think, first of all, parents are the primary educators. I firmly believe that. They, as the primary educators, need support. Some have coined the phrase, "It takes a community to raise a child," and it does. We entrust our children to their grandparents, to their aunts and uncles, to other significant adults, trustworthy adults. I start to move into the educational forum with regulated daycare. In some cases, that suits individuals' needs, but more importantly the introduction to education and the formation of a child's learning experience is professionally handled by a teacher. This is a trust relationship that's very impressive.

My wife is a junior kindergarten teacher at the moment. She has taught other grades, but she loves children. Being a parent of five children, my wife as a partner, we have successfully to this point in time—one never knows, but our youngest is 25 and our oldest is over 30, so that will give you some idea of the reference of which I speak. Each of them in their own respect is successful. They're successful because of that partnership with those trusting others in our lives, many of whom were teachers who gave them a new vision of their future, their hope, their opportunities, who encouraged them, who led them and who helped them to achieve their best personal potential.

I think of teachers as trusted professionals, much like a family doctor. I really do. We go into a doctor's office and we put our whole lives and personal frustrations and experience before them, sometimes not knowing them as well as we would know a teacher or other trusted friend.

I can hardly think of teachers without thinking of my older sister Catherine, who was a special education teacher, a coordinator in that area and who taught curriculum at Queen's on special education, and speech and language. After her retirement a few years ago, she did private consultations in that area. She's a gifted professional. She continued to take teaching courses all through her some 20-plus years of professional training as a teacher. She took courses all the time. I think what needs to be established is that's really what this is about.

There will be those who will natter on the other side of the House, the government now. There were relationship issues that were developed when we were government. Those may not be the right strategies to work out change in the workplace with professionals. You see that going on with Mr Smitherman today, with the doctors and the OMA agreement and firing certain individuals or at least being involved in provoking that work environment. And it will become quite controversial. The more he pressures professional groups, whether they are architects—your new regulations requiring architects to pursue certain updates is now an issue that many of you should be aware of. It's a technical area, a professional area, and the professional certification is now mandating that they take new updates on the building code. But I digress.

Bill 82 in its entirety is—I would only say in the very limited time I have, because normally I have up to an hour, but Mr Klees only left me about 25 minutes, which is surprising. For those viewing, Bill 82, which I took the time to read and reflect on the amendments it's making, is three pages. But it is half in French, so it is really one page. It really is one page. I think the best way to help the viewer and those who are not familiar with the bill—and many of the backbenchers are nodding that they have not read it. The bill repeals one part: "The bill repeals part III.1 of the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 which provides for a professional learning committee and sets out professional learning requirements for members of the college...."—all professions.

Those of you with a business background would know that a profession, by definition, is self-regulating, and professions in public sector areas primarily have a college that is the regulator, if you will, of the professional accreditation system, the licensing etc. That college system—I must commend the NDP on their history, because I'm looking forward to Mr Marchese's remarks later—has been somewhat suspect or weakened over the many years. In fact, the Royal Commission on Learning, for those who have an interest in the area, made a very strong recommendation that the college and the governance of the profession of teaching should not be dominated by the profession in case there was collusion or a conflict of interest between a person who was a member of a union—not that that's bad; that's a professional and an absolutely essential element. The Minister of Labour is shaking his head while he reads his purple paper on the next legislative amendment or cabinet document. But I don't think they should dominate the college that is to deal with the enforcement.

I'm going to make it clear to persons—many here have been teachers. In my case, I was a trustee for a number of years and did work in labour relations for some time as well. My undergraduate specialist was in labour relations, labour economics. That conflict perception, real or perceived, was the issue. Under the Royal Commission on Learning it got a lot of time. What it said was that the college should not be dominated by the union. It said that disciplinary functions of the college should be separate from the union. That's the issue, and

those who are refusing to look at the professionalization of teachers, which I support, don't realize the undue influence of the union.

I could draw to your attention, if you read the magazine *Professionally Speaking*, written for and about teachers, that there was an absolute lobby by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the women teachers' federation and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, who were actually advertising reprisals for any teacher who took the course, which we called PLP, the professional learning program. That's what this is about in Bill 82: PLP, the professional learning program. It was saying that as a professional—this is a little bit of a controversy too—you were required to take, I believe, 14 credits. I have to go through the bill. I think it was 14 credits over a period of time that they had to take. Now, were those credits full-year credits? No. In fact, many of them were Internet credits you could do, Qs and As, on-line in an hour. Many of them were being delivered in the classroom, on professional development days, by educators. All of them were educators.

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So let's be clear that we've established that not just my sister Catherine, my wife, Peggy, nor other members of my family, including my daughter, who's a secondary school teacher, are opposed to it. But the union said no. Why? Because they wanted to take out Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I understand that that's politics, that's the way it works. Good, bad, indifferent, you're government; you made the commitment. They bought you out. You will owe them. In fact, if you want to go back—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Bradley is yacking over there, but he was in government when David Peterson and Sean Conway tried to settle the teacher pension issue. They took him out. If you look to the records, and Mr Bradley, you could attest, they took you out on the teacher pension issue. They—

The Acting Speaker: Will the member take his seat. I would just like to remind the member to refer to other members of the House by their riding names, please. Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I will do that. I'll uncover our little legend here that tells me who the members are, which I would need. I have used a bit of time responding to that, Mr Speaker. I wonder if the clock could be set back because I have a number of things to establish here.

I'm not trying to be argumentative or belligerent about it. They are a very well organized, professional union or association. There are articles in *Professionally Speaking* and other publications, which I will produce if challenged, which I save, about punitive actions if teachers took the courses. Now, many of the teachers took the courses. They just didn't register, so they'd be in compliance with the union wish. In fact, I have it on good standing because one of my younger children was in teachers' college. The teachers doing their practicum—these are new, training teachers—were being told not to take the courses. Can you imagine a profession being so

regressive in their thinking, trying to deny the professional development that teachers want and do take? The 14 credits weren't going to take 14 years; in fact, they could all be achieved quite normally.

Teachers today do work hard, and I have my own personal experience. I believe that the union itself was being regressive, in terms of trying to allow the professionals—especially the new, young teachers who wanted to become administrators or department heads or who wanted to take their specialists', who were being penalized if they tried to improve their professional performance. That's sad. If you did it to a doctor, there'd be outrage; if you did it to a lawyer, you'd be outraged; if you did it to a pharmacist—the college of pharmacy or dentistry or nursing regulates them in the professional due diligence activities and the disciplinary functions thereof. They have unions. The Ontario Medical Association is basically a professional doctors' union. It does the negotiating and that's appropriate, and I'm not denigrating that, nor do I the unions. The unions should have their business, which is workplace issues and remuneration issues; grids and structures and contracts and those kinds of things are very appropriate. But to think that they were being regressive and were repelling or pushing down the professional needs of teachers was just unthinkable and would be unacceptable in any other profession.

By and large, I could remember when Earl Manners and John Snobelen were just like two skunks in a lane-way, bad-tempered leaders in both respects. Possibly as government we were part of a problem, but it did a disservice to the profession. In fact, Bill 82 is your payday for the teacher union bosses—not the individual teachers I'm speaking of who are in need of an inspiration and to be recognized and complimented for the professional due diligence and challenges they face with all the special circumstances with children today, because each child is an individual. My five children are individuals. They all have different learning styles. They all learn at different times of the day, different contents; some are visual learners, some are auditory learners, and teachers have to modify programs. There has to be an individualized program plan for each student. There have to be remarks. Parents are far more engaged than they were years ago because they want the best for their children.

It's a very stressful job, and I'd be the first to stand and support individual teachers and their need to be treated as a profession. They should demand not one thing less from their union leaders, who are nothing more than Sid Ryan and the rest of them, blabbering on about power and control. These are professionals. I want them to be thought of the same as any other profession. As I said, if you take a business course, you'll learn that a profession, by definition, is a self-regulating organization.

"Self-regulating" means there has to be a separation of the professional codes of ethics and enforcement, the disciplinary issues as well as the collective bargaining issues, which are the union issues, no different than the

OMA or the College of Pharmacists, which deals with the Ministry of Health on dispensing fees.

I'm saddened when I think of it. I really think there are other things in education that are far, far more important than this bill permits me to speak about, but since I have seven minutes left, I will, anyway. I think I've established that I will not be supporting this bill, which is a payoff for the artificial election promises that Dalton McGuinty and his band put forward during the election. They have never stopped breaking those promises every single day, starting on day one with the health tax—the education tax was to follow. In fact, it's playing its way through right now as I speak.

I think about the rancour on busing that's virtually palpable in my riding. In fact, there was a protest last night at the Durham Board of Education on the very issue of the inequity of the transportation budget by the Minister of Education, who isn't even here to listen to this important debate. I shouldn't say that; it's uncalled for. He probably is attending important meetings; I understand that. Hopefully, he'll get a transcript of Hansard, or Minister Bradley will give it to him tomorrow.

The other one I've been getting a lot of calls on—and it troubles me because these are the most vulnerable—is that they clawed back any surplus on special education that any board had in their planning horizon. They gave them the money, but if you had any reserve, they clawed it back. These were boards that were planning for implementation of special education programs for the very vulnerable children who need those supports. Yet they made an announcement or a claim that they were giving them more money. In fact, I have a memo from my board—there are actually six boards that I represent, including the French language boards. They are shaken.

I try to relate legislation on a personal level. I'll use my own family, because then I can't get into trouble with any of my constituents for using them as references without permission. My wife is a professional and is always updating herself on-line and using resource curriculum material from TVO and other curriculum sources. All teachers do that in their preparation and education plans. Their principals and their staff do work together, whether it's on professional development days or other days.

I think the minister needs to just get out of the way a bit. The unions need to move over a bit and let the college and the profession work things out, because the teachers for the most part have been doing it for years.

I still think of things locally. Special education is a huge challenge, and the new technology of learning, what I call distance learning or individualized learning. Each child today has different learning styles and different learning timetables. They are very computer literate. I think that when we introduced the electronic report card, there was a challenge for many teachers.

We introduced a lot of changes in curriculum and curriculum resources. There was a swamp of changes going on, all of which, I should say, came out of the Royal Commission on Learning. I think there were 123

recommendations from that commission. David Cooke and—I forget who the co-chair of that implementation was, but it was an extremely good reference document. Monique Bégin, that's who it was.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): That's where you get all your ideas.

Mr O'Toole: Well, it's true. I think, as Minister Bradley says, that it has good ideas, and we supported them. In fact, Mr Bradley, it did say that the teacher evaluation system and the professional development that was part of it should be separated. It also said that public education should be funded equitably, which we tried to do under the student-focused funding model. In fact, the Royal Commission on Learning said that rich school boards like Toronto were spending \$7,000 and \$8,000 per student and in my area they were spending \$4,000 because they had no assessment base. We fixed those problems.

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Now, there were boards that in fact were receiving more, because they had a rich assessment base, and there were boards, mostly rural boards, that had poor assessment bases, so they had no resources. Yet they were all lined up at the employment office at graduation to apply to a university or apply for a job. Why should they not receive the same resources? The argument could be made whether it's enough or too many resources; I don't have a problem with that. But why were people treated so inequitably in Ontario? It took years and years of educators working with politicians of all stripes. We did it. Of course the Toronto board, the Ottawa board, the Hamilton board and the London board—the rich boards—were mad as heck because they were going to get less money per student. But it was going to be equitably divided; it wasn't going to be based on how rich you were for your tax base.

That these changes came through the Royal Commission on Learning has been pointed out. The courage, I put to you, is to do the right thing and vote against your government on this bill, because it is acquiescent to the unions.

Mr Marchese: Union bosses.

Mr O'Toole: No, it is not. The unions have their role, and I respect that role. The college has its role, and I respect that role. The boards of education have a role, and I respect that role. The curriculum isn't different in Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury or Toronto. The curriculum should be uniform. I believe in province-wide negotiations as well. I believe teachers should be paid for extracurricular activities like drama, music and technical skills, where they have a passion and a thirst to provide students with leadership and inspiration.

There are a lot of ways that you could move forward. I see nothing in this bill except a payday for the likes of some of the union leaders who do a disservice to their very profession. Teachers here today who are members of this assembly need to stand up and put some words around your profession. Don't always be kowtowing to the likes of Earl Manners.

I challenge you: Look at any of them. My point, though, is that there is more to be done. My parting remark is that I believe teachers are an important partner in education. I believe they are professionals. I believe that individually they always want to progress in their profession, whether it's in technology or getting a specialist paper. I believe this legislation denies the encouragement of taking professional development to the highest level so that teachers themselves can achieve their very best potential, not just as teachers but as human beings.

What you're doing with this legislation is the wrong thing. It's mean-spirited to the professional idealism of individual teachers. I ask you to vote against your government on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I was taken mostly by the remarks by the member for Oak Ridges, who said this bill has so many words such as "repeal" over and over again. He thinks it's so negative and that there's so very little that's positive.

I was reminded about 1995, when the New Democrats, prior to losing, had an employment equity bill. It didn't take the Conservatives long to repeal the employment equity bill. They had no problem repealing that. Their way of restitution and/or remedy, should there be a problem around issues of employment equity, was that we're all equal. You don't need a remedy for any kind of potential abuse because, they argued, we are all equal.

People with disabilities know we're not all equal. People of colour know we are not all equal. Aboriginal people know we are not all equal. Women know we are not all equal. Yet, in their mind, repealing employment equity was the answer because we are all equal. Then he argues that we need to have the program this government is repealing because how else do you ensure quality and qualifications? I wonder whether this applies to politicians as well.

So, if we demand that teachers take 14 courses—seven obligatory and seven optional—does the member from Oak Ridges believe that we should have 14 courses that perhaps politicians should take in order to make us a little more quality, kind of producing politicians? I don't know. I would think he would agree with me.

He spoke about teachers' strikes. In this regard, I think McGuinty would have agreed with him, because he did say in 1992 or 1993 that we should abolish teachers'—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'd just like to follow up on some of the remarks my colleague from Trinity-Spadina made. As a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, as a lawyer who came to practising law in 1988 and from that time, we never had a requirement to have testing afterwards. We have instead the Law Society of Upper Canada as well as other teaching instruments like the continuing legal education programs, which allow lawyers to take these programs and get upgraded in their profession. So if a lawyer is

practising wills, he or she can get updated in that particular area. It's the same with criminal law, litigation law and so on.

I think the key point with this bill is that it is asking why teachers should be subjected to mandatory courses and having to complete 14 courses every five years to maintain their teaching certificates. If this had to be done for teachers, then perhaps the same should be done for lawyers and for other professions as well. The list goes on and on and on. Some would argue that senior citizens, when they reach a certain age, should be retested for their drivers' licences.

So I think what we're trying to do here and why I support this bill is that it provides some equity and some respect to the professionals who are the teachers. I am a product myself of the public school system. I attended school in Scarborough, Ionview Public School, from kindergarten all the way to grade 8, and from there, high school, from grades 9 to 13 at Winston Churchill Collegiate, also in Scarborough. The teachers there were professional, they were excellent, they were outstanding, and they didn't need to go to take special courses. If they want to upgrade their level of skills, they can do that in their spare time, but to impose it upon them, I think, is unfair. This bill addresses that inequity and repairs it. That's why I support the bill today.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to just say a couple of words in support of the comments made by my colleagues from Oak Ridges and Durham. Mr O'Toole and Mr Klees did an excellent job, and I agree with what they said in terms of that this is simply kowtowing to the teachers' unions. We're going back to a state in this province that we had prior to our government coming to office in 1995, where the unions were running the education system. It even got so bad that you had to have permission to go into your own schools as an MPP because the so-called professional unions had taken over that turf. They didn't want any politicians around and they didn't want us checking up on them.

The previous speaker from the government side indicated that this is showing respect for teachers, that cancelling teacher testing is somehow showing respect. The professional learning program that we brought in for teachers in 1996, I think, was the greatest show of respect to the profession. It made sure that parents and children know that the teachers are competent, that they're not afraid to be tested from time to time, that they're not afraid to partake in lifelong learning, which is something that was certainly drilled into my head when I went to school from the very good teachers I had, both in elementary and high school, and later in university. It should complement the profession. It should be something the profession welcomes. This is a ridiculous bill that cancels teacher testing, and I don't think the parents have been consulted. I don't think the government consulted anyone except the teachers' unions.

In fact, Mr O'Toole tells me that the Ontario Parent Council is worried that it may not even be in existence in the near future. Apparently, the government hasn't

appointed members to that for some time, and it's a clear indication that you're showing disrespect for the children, disrespect for the parents and disrespect for the teaching profession by introducing this legislation. I certainly won't be supporting it.

1700

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'd like to comment on my friend from Durham. My wife happens to be a teacher in the same board as the member from Durham. I don't need to listen to the so-called union bosses the members opposite have identified. Talk to the rank-and-file teachers, the people who are in there day in and day out, who have an enormous responsibility to help shape our young people in this community to go on to be future leaders. When you talk to them, they'll tell you it started with our friend Mr Snobelen when he said, "I'm going to create a crisis in the education system." That's exactly what he did.

Mr Levac: A phony war.

Mr Leal: My friend from Brantford says, "A phony war," and that's exactly what happened. They embarked on a course of action to kick the rank-and-file teachers in Ontario in the teeth. Morale was dissipated by their actions. Day in and day out they wanted to bash our rank-and-file teachers.

As a city councillor, I was often in the classrooms in Peterborough chatting to students and teachers about civics. One of the things they constantly said was, "Why doesn't this government lay off? We're a professional body. They don't pick on anybody else like that, but they want to pick on us. They single us out for their bashing. They don't respect us. We're a profession. We're like lawyers, doctors and others, and we go through every summer"—I know personally that every summer my wife was taking courses to upgrade her skills, and I know that most of the teachers at St Teresa's in Peterborough, where my wife teaches, were taking summer courses. Mr Speaker, I know your wife was taking courses every summer to improve her skills. We know the commitment that rank-and-file teachers have on a day-to-day basis to help shape those young minds so they become the leaders of tomorrow in politics, business and industry.

So this bill is an appropriate bill. Let's get on and pass it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: I appreciate the member from Trinity-Spadina; in fact, I'm looking forward to his comments and his very entertaining style in the next hour. Scarborough Southwest is a lawyer. He's well aware—my son has just passed the bar exams—that if they want to progress in their career, they have to take courses. They have to be familiar with case law and recent court decisions. The case law books that used to be on the shelf are now on the computer.

Mr Levac: They're not forced.

Mr O'Toole: No, they're not forced, but they don't move up the grid unless they take courses, the same as teachers. If you don't take more courses, you don't get

more money. If you're part of a union that ratchets everybody up at the same time, the rising water raises all boats even though some of them may not float.

I guess the other point is that the Simcoe-Grey member had it right, talking about the concern of the parents. The voice of parents: We put student trustees on the board. I think that's an important achievement, not just for students but for the boards to speak about students and about their learning environment. It's absolutely critical, as the parent of five children.

I'm well familiar that the wife of the the member from Peterborough is a teacher, and I commend them. I've not said a negative thing about teachers, nor will I, period. I want that to be clearly on the record.

I can say to you that what I am concerned about is moving the profession into the future. Whether you're a lawyer or any professional—if my son is in commercial law and he wants to stay current, he's going to have to take up issues with securities law. He's going to have to take up issues that are proposed amendments by Mr Phillips with respect to the review of the Ontario Securities Commission.

For any profession and, if you want to look at it, even any trade today, there are no more watchmakers unless they have kept up with the digital world; the basket maker, the wheel maker, all trades and all skills must update themselves. It isn't necessarily mandatory. I think it's more a word of language. Please reflect on this bill and respect teaching.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your comments. Further debate?

Mr Marchese: First of all, I want to welcome the good people of Ontario to this political forum. It's 5 o'clock, it's Tuesday and it's good to be here.

Interjection: And we're live.

Mr Marchese: And we are on live, exactly. So don't turn off your sets.

I want to spend a little bit of time reviewing the Tory legacy because I think it's worthwhile. Then I will speak to the issue of professional learning programs that we are here to debate. I will argue that I'm in agreement with what the Liberals are doing and, if I have some time, I want to devote as much critical attention to the Liberals and some of their other initiatives, because I want to share my time equally between bashing the Tory legacy and whacking, as much as I can, the Liberal kinds of initiatives that we are against. I'm an equal-opportunity kind of politician. I don't want to bash one political party and not touch the other.

Interjection: You're an equal-opportunity basher.

Mr Marchese: I am.

I want to start by talking about the comments that the member from Oak Ridges made. I might touch on what the member from Durham said as well, but in a general sort of way.

The member from Oak Ridges—and I want to review this—says that this government is simply repealing an initiative that they disagree with, that it's so totally bad and wrong and there is nothing positive about this

initiative whatsoever. I want to remind those of you who are watching that the Tories repealed many New Democratic initiatives and bills in the space of a couple of weeks, and they didn't have a problem doing that whatsoever. They repealed the employment equity bill that we thought was a progressive measure intended to bring about greater equity for groups of people that have faced discrimination over a long period of time and still face discrimination. Those target groups under employment equity were women, aboriginal people, people of colour and people with disabilities. We went to great pains to try to establish, or at least introduce, a bill that would bring about greater equity for groups that have been discriminated against in the past and continue to suffer discrimination.

How do you deal with those kinds of problems we have in society where, clearly, many politicians of all political stripes would rather not deal with those issues and hope they will go away? We attempted, through the employment equity bill, to say, "Discrimination exists against aboriginal people, against people of colour, against people with disabilities and, yes, even women still today." Most politicians don't want to touch the issue of discrimination. Most politicians don't want to touch the issue of racism. They would prefer that somehow these issues go away, but they don't. They have to be dealt with.

When the Tories got elected in 1995, they had no problem saying, "We're going to repeal that bill," and said quickly, "We are all equal, and because we are all equal, we don't need a bill to bring greater equity to anybody," because, in their view, there is no discrimination. If there were, you could go to the Human Rights Commission, wait a couple of years, wait in line, bring your complaint, find a lawyer, perhaps—if you can afford one, and if can't, you're on your own—and simply line up for years waiting for justice to happen to you. It just doesn't happen that way. It was sad; it was really, really sad, what you guys did. It didn't take you long—a couple of weeks and it was gone; repealed.

Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, today decries the fact that this government simply introduces a bill repealing what they did, and he says, "It's wrong." They all believe it. It wasn't just Frank Klees. They all believe it, I think, the members who have spoken.

The legacy that then-government left us is a pretty pitiful legacy that I also want to review very briefly—maybe 15, 20 minutes—and then move on to other issues, because there's so much to say. The Tories centralized education funding for the purposes of doing one thing, and one thing only: to take money out of the educational system. They took control away from local boards to have the ability to raise money so that they would have local control to deal with their own local issues and centralize power in a way that we have never, ever before seen in Canada, in a way that they would normally decry and attack should any other government have done it. We believe, by centralizing, they took money away—as a ruse, as a ploy, to take money out of the education system. Indeed, they took \$2 billion out of

the education system, all the while denying it for years and years, until Dr Rozanski came in, a man they hired to do a review of the education system. He said, "Yes, you've got to restore \$2 billion," which equalled the money they took out of the education system. It wasn't tough to come to that conclusion.

1710

We told every Minister of Education who was Conservative, and every Premier we've had in that party, that they siphoned off, sucked away, \$2 billion, desperately needed, out of the education system. All the while they denied it, and all the while they would say, as the member for Durham said today, "We tried to bring about greater equity across the board," and they did. They harmonized downward in such a way that they took money away from boards that could have used the money to deal with local inner-city issues. They took it away from Toronto and other boards, and then harmonized downwards across the board in a way that no one really benefited, except all boards were equally hurt by the cuts they made.

Education assistants were fired everywhere they had them. Vice-principals were fired in great numbers across all of Ontario. Guidance counsellors were lost, desperately needed to be held but were fired and lost from many boards where they had them. Special education programs were being lost, and they were desperately needed everywhere they had them. Gym teachers were needed and were lost everywhere we had specialized teachers. Custodial staff, caretakers, were lost in most high schools and reduced almost by half in almost every high school across Ontario. Music teachers were lost across Ontario. Librarians were lost across Ontario.

You understand, these are people we needed in the education system. Librarians would argue that they make an incredible contribution toward the literacy of our students, and indeed they are right. Every study that has ever been done will show that is indeed the case. But many librarians were fired. Our teachers were fired.

We've seen school closures in greater numbers under the Conservative government than ever before. Students were sharing textbooks, tattered textbooks in many cases, across Ontario. You understand, Mr Speaker, you were part of a government that has left us a sorry legacy. There is nothing at all to be proud of in terms of what you people did, but if you hear the member for Oak Ridges or even the member for Durham, you would think, "My God, what they did was so good for every student."

You introduced a new curriculum without helping teachers to prepare for the new curriculum. Yes, it was rigorous, and I don't disagree with making the curriculum rigorous, but you didn't help the teachers at all through any professional development to deal with the new curriculum. You just threw it at them and said, "You take care." If students didn't do so well, it was too bad, so sad. Thousands of students dropped out of high school like you've never, ever seen before. What did you have to help them out? Absolutely nothing. Students failing the grade 10 literacy test, and what did we have for them? Absolument rien. That's a sad legacy.

I just don't know what you people did that I could praise. Not much. I can't attack the curriculum changes too much because I agree with some of them, although some of that curriculum is not doing very much for some of the students, and there's nothing in place to help them out.

You eliminated professional development days—I believe seven out of nine or the 11 that they used to have. I guess teachers don't need professional development. But you had a different formula for getting at that, and I'll get to that in a moment.

It was about bashing teachers. That's what the political game was all about. It is as simple as that. So when my friend Jim from Simcoe-Grey says that the professional learning program was all about showing respect for teachers, I have to respectfully disagree with him. It wasn't about respecting teachers, and the courses the teachers were required to take were not a way to test teachers. But the member from Simcoe-Grey and many others still keep referring to those courses as if they were tests. There were no tests. There are no tests available, anywhere in North America or Europe or anywhere that I'm aware of, that have been devised to test a teacher. But the Tories keep on referring to anything they did as testing teachers, teachers' tests. Why do they do that? Why do they still say it? Why did they say it then? Because to simply say, "We're testing teachers," goes well with about the 30% or 40% of the public who doesn't like teachers, who may have had a negative experience with teachers, who actually believe that teachers are incompetent.

You, Conservative individual members in government at the time, created the image and the belief that teachers were incompetent and that you needed to fix them. That's what these courses were all about. John Snobelen's notion of creating a crisis is connected to all of this. Talking about teacher testing is talking about creating a crisis, creating divisions between "us" and "them," because what you wanted to do was to find enough people out there who would say that what you were doing was right. And how do you do that? You turn a third of the public, or half the public if you can, against another group that you hoped they would hate. You knew very well that you could always find enough people in society who would hate teachers. I don't know why you didn't go after lawyers, because you would probably find more people hating lawyers than you did finding people hating teachers. It seems to me that it was much easier to go after teachers than it was going after lawyers, or someone else. Pick an enemy, like Bush in the USA does. Pick a country you can pick on just because you can.

You guys did that with teachers: Pick on someone just because you can, and pick on teachers because it's good politics, eh, Doctor?

Mr Qaadri: That's right. There are Republicans. You're so right.

Mr Marchese: Yes, and that's what that was all about. The idea of forcing teachers to take courses was not a pedagogical decision; it was a political decision.

It's really very simple. You can say all you want to hide it and mask it and you can manipulate it however you want and you can euphemize it however you want, but it was really political, not pedagogical.

Mr Qaadri: That's a new word: "euphemize"; interesting.

Mr Marchese: You can do that. It's poetic licence in this place.

How brilliant it was to attack teachers through the union bosses, because you can't attack teachers. It's difficult, you understand. The member from Durham's spouse is a teacher, and everybody knows a teacher here. We all love teachers, don't we? So you can't attack teachers directly. How do you do it? You attack them through the teachers' unions, because that's how you get to it.

You know now and you knew then that if you go after unions and union bosses, you're likely to get 20% of the public out there, 25%, possibly even 30%, saying, "Union bosses: That's what's ruining this country." You know that. You know it now and you knew it then. It's an "us and them" kind of politics.

1720

I've never seen it like that ever in this place as I've seen it under the leadership of Mike Harris, in particular, and to a lesser extent under Ernie Eves. But Mike Harris was the worst in terms of creating a politics of polarization in this place. It was pretty bad; pretty evil, I would say.

Why would you require teachers to take 14 courses and not require politicians to take 14 courses? God knows, politicians could sure use some courses. You could, of course, argue about the benefit of certain courses that we would be obliged to take. You would argue the merits of that, I'm sure. But if we require teachers to take 14 courses, I have a feeling, a hunch—I could be wrong—that a lot of politicians in this place could use 14 courses, seven obligatory and seven optional. I could be wrong.

I have a feeling that doctors possibly could use 14 courses a year, seven optional and seven obligatory. I could be wrong. I have a feeling that nurses could use 14 courses—seven optional, seven obligatory—but I could be wrong. I have a feeling that paramedics could use 14 courses, but I could be wrong. Police officers, every kind of profession that deals with the issue of public safety, could use those courses.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Failing—what do you do? I don't know. How do you unelect politicians?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you can't depoliticize, but how do you unelect the politicians if they fail the courses? This is true.

How come we didn't oblige any other profession in the same way that we oblige teachers? La raison is because it was easy to pick on teachers. It was easy to create the image that teachers are overpaid and underworked because you could find anyone in society, in-

cluding this place, but generally everywhere, who would say, "My God, teachers are overpaid." Why? "Because they have the summers off. It's just not right that they should have the summers off. I don't have the summer off, so why should they?"

Politicians, you know, do have some time off. We do.

Interjection: When was that?

Mr Marchese: We do have some time off and we're paid for it. We are. Teachers are paid too. But we don't complain that there are periods when we're not in this assembly. Presumably most of us are working out there during the time that we're not here. Presumably we are. We don't attack ourselves for that, but we can attack teachers. Why do we do that? Because it's easy.

By the way, even though I'd say this, there are a whole lot of people who hate politicians, and you know that, Mr Speaker, because it's easy to hate a politician, right? In the scale of popularity there is no predilection for loving politicians; there isn't. So that part is true.

It is equally true that when you came into power you pretended to be the non-political party, the party that didn't want to be a political party, which is oxymoronic, I've got to admit. You knew that too because you came here knowing full well that the idea of calling yourselves the non-political party had resonance out there. They liked that. But it's contradictory. You can't have a non-political party. It doesn't exist. It can't happen.

Everything you did had a lot to do with politicizing education, attacking the teaching profession, and then you had to find the ways to do it. So you had Snobelen creating the crisis. Poor guy, he got caught. He didn't want to, but he got caught, and it was really sad for him. Well, I don't think he regretted it. I don't think John ever had any problems being caught on camera saying, "We've got to create a crisis," you've got to admit. But that's how it all began, and so the whole thing unravelled in that way and then it simply continued. Then you just had to find the right tools in the toolbox to simply get people to hate the profession, and the teacher testing was all part of it. It was all part of the politics of division. Every Tory who went out there and every political staffer from the Conservative Party who went out there was saying, "This is a teacher test." You had Madame Ecker from time to time calling it a teacher test and from time to time calling it something else. Depending on whom she spoke with, she would say, "Yes, this is a teacher test," and if she was speaking to teachers, she would say, "This is a professional learning program."

You understand the politics of that, right? Because you can't confuse teachers. You can't say to teachers, "This is a test," because they know it's not a test. What teachers know is that they've got to pay for those programs. They knew that. Teachers had to pay for those courses. It's not as if the government said, "We think you should be taking the courses and we're going to pay for them for you." No, the teachers had to pay to get re-trained to ensure quality and qualification. So we obliged them to take seven obligatory courses to ensure quality and qualification.

Le problème happens to be that those courses people took had nothing to do with what those teachers were doing in the classroom. Some courses, I suspect, might have been useful as a matter of interest. Yes, I imagine that in each course you would learn something. But whether or not each and every one of those courses, seven obligatory and seven not, were good for the classroom teacher is in my humble view very questionable, given the kind of feedback we got from teachers as to what they were obliged to take. So did it test teachers? Not really. "But we did force them to pay for those courses and we, as Tories, could feel good to say to the public, 'Oh, no, we're testing them. You parents feel good out there. You feel good because we're testing them daily.'" Did they learn much from it? I don't think so, and most teachers tell us that.

That's why Liberals said they would repeal the professional learning program act that created it, and that's why New Democrats said they would do the same. That's why I stand here today supporting this initiative, because I think it's the right thing to do. There are some concerns, I must admit. There is nothing I have learned yet about what this government is doing that speaks to what the government is going to do once they've repealed this bill. You would think that a year after being in government they would have some ideas that they could put in place relatively quickly to make this situation better, but we have nothing. Yes, they have talked about the idea of mentoring, and they've talked about a few other things: professional development days, maybe increasing them—

Mr Qaadri: Summer programs.

Mr Marchese: Yes, they've talked about summer programs. This is true. They've done that. But I haven't seen anything yet by way of what I think we should be seeing a year after being in office. They are much quicker on some other things, but on this, which is much easier, we haven't seen much.

I have to tell you that I've got a lot of other concerns about what this government is doing, because while the Tories had a predilection for obfuscation, this government has a similar predilection to obfuscate. While they argue that only Tories used to do that, I want to illustrate how Liberals are very much doing the same. They can do something as practical as getting rid of this professional learning program because it's not pedagogical—no problemo—but in terms of how they're dealing with some other issues, I want to point out some problems because I think it's instructive in terms of understanding the modus operandi of the Liberal Party.

1730

I want to comment on a few things that the Minister of Education is doing, has responded to, and I'll begin by talking about the issue of busing. You understand that the former government, the Tories, used to say, "We are treating everybody equally. We had benchmarks, we had a funding formula," and the funding formula was really a bad formula? It was inadequate, it was underfunding, and that's what it was about. We never allowed boards to catch up in terms of inflationary increases, so every year

boards were getting less and less and every year we were waiting for the Conservative government to deal with the issue of transportation because we were hearing out there that there were simply not enough dollars to deal with the issue of busing, particularly for regions of the north or the east or other areas where you have to cover a whole lot of area. They said, "We need more money to be able to transport students from one place to the other," otherwise you have students travelling for hours on a bus.

So then the Liberals get into power and say, "We've got a solution." They say, "We have an equitable solution." They call it Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario. I would remind the Liberals who are here, and you would know better, that under different circumstances—this is not a prop—when the government says "equitable allocation" and the result, which I'm about to demonstrate, is inequitable, Liberals would have accused the Tories, as I did in every instance, that what it says in the title belies the content of it.

You are adopting the same methodology and language as the Tories did. This model that you call a discussion paper, that your Minister of Education calls a discussion paper, is inequitable and it is in place at the moment. Your minister yesterday, in response to my question, said, "This is a discussion paper," meaning, "If it's a discussion paper, no decisions have been made." Is that correct, Speaker? Yes, of course. Liberals, is that correct? If it's a discussion paper, that means no decision has been made; is that correct, Doctor? Generally speaking, right? But what has happened? The Minister of Education has allowed a little more than half of the boards to get extra money, and that is being phased in this year and next year. Thirty-one boards are getting zero dollars this year, and next year they have to cut.

I will admit that your minister is giving a 2% increase to all boards. I will admit that, because if I don't, then it would not admit to a particular reality or truth. It's the truth. So when you raise this point with the minister, he will say, "It's not true. Everybody got an increase." While that is true, 31 boards will be getting cuts next year, and the other approximately 41 boards are getting increases this year, as part of the phase-in, and next year. So you understand, Dave, that this is not a discussion paper. The decision has been made. But yesterday the minister was so smug in terms of—you're doubtful? Dave Levac from Brant is doubtful. Come on. I thought I outlined it pretty clearly. It's clear: Boards are getting money this year. If 41 boards are getting money this year, that means it's no longer a discussion paper. It means decisions have been made. That is why 31 boards are preparing for the cuts they have to make next year by making sure that they are creating different policies that will make it possible for certain students not to have a seat on that bus.

I don't know whether the good people of Ontario are following this. I hope I've been clear to point out that this Minister of Education—and he's a symbol of what the Liberal Party does on many other issues—obfuscates, manipulates the facts over and over again.

The Clerk is looking askance. I'm getting the impression that one of the Clerks doesn't think that's proper.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Manipulation of the facts is not proper? I'll rephrase it.

The Acting Speaker: I've consulted with the table. I would ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to withdraw the word "obfuscate."

Mr Marchese: I'll withdraw the word "manipulation."

The Acting Speaker: Did you not hear what I said? The word "obfuscate."

Mr Marchese: "Obfuscate"? You're kidding. Isn't that funny? What you wanted me to withdraw was the word "manipulation," not "obfuscate." Isn't that interesting. OK, I will withdraw "obfuscation," which essentially means "confusing," by the way, so I'm not quite sure what I'm withdrawing, but if you want—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you made that decision, not the Chair. Mr Speaker, "obfuscate" means "to confuse." "Manipulation," in my mind, is stronger than the other one, but you've asked me to withdraw "obfuscation," not "manipulation." I wanted to clarify, that's all. I'll withdraw "obfuscation," although I've got to tell you that when you do that it really makes it tough in this place to find appropriate words to describe what one needs to describe.

This minister is manipulating the facts—you said that was OK—and I'll show how he's doing that on the matter of special education as well, although I prefer "obfuscation."

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is a question of whether or not we're speaking to the bill. I know there is some latitude given, but I would suggest that the PLP is an important aspect of education. I know the member has indicated he wants to do that, and I would advise that I think it's been long enough that he hasn't come back to topic, and I'd appreciate he do so.

The Acting Speaker: I believe the member for Trinity-Spadina is speaking to the bill.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Dave, I'm a bit surprised at you. I gave the Liberal members a whole lot of leeway as they meandered here and there. I noticed that the Tories meandered here and there as well, but connected to the bill. I'm trying to do the same. I wanted to argue that when the Conservative Party manipulated certain things, I was showing how you guys are doing the same, creating a link, while at the same time supporting this bill.

Mr Levac: PLP.

Mr Marchese: Yes.

Mr Levac: OK, sorry. I apologize.

Mr Marchese: I'm just putting out the facts, because I've got a little time. I wanted to talk about special ed. Here you had the Conservative government cutting special education programs and special-ed teachers. You guys come in and say, "We're fixing that." I was speaking to the negative legacy left by the Tories, and I want to

point out that you guys are manipulating this issue in a way that I believe is wrong.

Let me explain it. The Minister of Education, about a couple of months ago, in July, announced he was giving \$100 million for special ed. That's what he said. Simultaneously, he said he's taking away \$100 million from the boards. That's what he did, and that's what he's doing. He said, "We're taking that money," which presumably exists in surplus dollars somewhere—

Mr Levac: In reserve funds.

Mr Marchese: —in reserve funds—"and we're going to put it in a fund that boards have to apply for."

Let me explain the problems around what he did in terms of how he manipulated that. First of all, boards have to fill out forms in order to qualify for special education dollars. You need a psychologist to sign off on that to be able to get special education dollars—right, Dave? That was the final phase of the Tory legacy around the application of special education dollars.

1740

The Conservative government had an allocation of money which they presumed to be \$35 million. When you guys got into power and you realized that the final phase was costing close to \$100 million, you said, "My God, what do we do? We don't have an allocation of \$100 million. We only have an allocation of \$35 million." Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, said, "How do I deal with this problem? I don't have the money. What do I do?" So he waits for seven months; he waits for seven months to make a decision about the release of the money.

Now, some boards are saying, "The money is not coming. It's not flowing as it should. What do we do?" They say, "Let's put it aside, because we don't know whether this government is going to flow the money as they said they would, and if it is gone, that means we'll be stuck with programs for which we have no money." So they put it in the reserve funds. What Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, did was to take money from the reserve fund of 2002-03, which has already been spent. We called all the boards; we called them personally.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You can say what you like. We called them because we wanted to be sure that we were on the right track.

They took money, presumably surplus in reserve funds, that was spent in 2002-03, and they also took money from the reserve of 2003-04, money which was allocated to be spent this September. That special education money was going to be spent this September. In July, the Minister of Education made the announcement that "We're putting \$100 million into special ed, but we're taking away money from the boards that presumably have these surplus dollars that were not being spent." And what I have told you through our research is that boards spent the money in 2002-03—but it appeared in the books as if it was surplus—and money that would have been spent in 2003-04, this September, had the money flowed from the Ministry of Education.

To complicate the matter even further, the Minister of Education says in his document, which I have read, "We don't have \$100 million to give to the boards"—money that has already been, or ought to have been, allocated on the basis of filling out those forms. He says, "We don't have \$100 million; it's only \$50 million." It's in your documents. I have read them.

So you don't have \$100 million any more to give out—which you stole from the boards. You only have \$50 million. Not only that—and Dave, you might be aware of it because you're in the teaching profession—you have to apply through a new application process. Money that should have been given on the basis of the old system or the old formula for filling out the forms, you now have to apply for. However, the application process is not yet in place. You took \$100 million away from boards, which they had spent or were going to spend, and you're telling them, "We don't have \$100 million; it's only \$50 million. Oh, but by the way, we don't yet have an application for you to fill out."

You see what I mean? I find it very complicated. Only through this kind of environment do I have the time to be able to explain what you're doing, which you attacked when the Tories were doing it. So I take the opportunity to attack the Tory legacy and to attack, similarly, what you are doing. So while there are some initiatives that you are engaged in that I can agree with, I want to expose the politics that you are engaged in that I believe is manipulative. Unless you find those opportunities in this place to do so, where are you going to find the time?

Similarly, with capping class size—the member from Durham talked about that. The member from Oak Ridges talked about class size as an issue. Capping class size costs anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion, we estimate conservatively. The Tories estimate that it's \$1.2 billion, \$1.5 billion; I don't know. But a conservative figure to cap class sizes is \$500 million to \$1 billion. That's a whole lot of pecunia that you don't have. You don't have it. So this government says, it has allocated—I believe it's close to \$100 million—for capping class sizes.

The problem is that in my phoning around, a whole lot of classes have gone up and not many classes have gone down. Conveniently, the Minister of Education and the Premier go to a particular classroom where classes have gone down for one reason or another, presumably or possibly because there are fewer students going to that school; therefore, you have smaller classes. But on the whole, many classes are going up and not many classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 are going down.

The Minister of Education uses, simultaneously, class reduction and capping of class sizes as being the same. They're not the same. The Liberal promise was that classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 would be capped at a certain number. You don't find the government going around every school and/or giving us a report that would tell us how many classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 have gone down as a way of determining the fact that the capping of class sizes can indeed happen in three year's time. I am telling you, it will never happen. I am predicting now that it

cannot and will never happen because you simply do not have the money to make that promise happen. If the program costs anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion, you cannot make that happen, because the money is not there to cap class sizes. So you, Liberal government, are going to do the same as the Conservative government in terms of naming something in a way that you think you can get away with by simply talking about reduction of class size as being synonymous with the capping of class size. I'm telling you, Dave, you can't do it. You're not going to be able to do it.

I want to point this out because people out there need to know the facts. And you're never going to get the facts by way of a comment that you can make with a journalist where the journalist only allows you two key words because that's all the time they have for you to explain this kind of stuff. You need the time to be able to adequately manage an issue. That's how you do it.

It's easy to say, "We are repealing the professional learning program," and it's done. Many of us have explained that the professional learning programs were not intended to help teachers. And we explained, I explained, and the Liberals before me similarly have done the work to say that this was not about helping teachers, but it was about punishing teachers.

Nowhere at any time did the past Conservative government talk about mentoring, which the Liberals are talking about now. We have yet to see any concrete idea or concrete proposal put forth that speaks to what mentoring means and what they would do to help teachers deal with the issues they face on a daily basis. The Tories never did that. Teachers would love to have the help of other professionals to deal with behavioural problems in the classroom. Wouldn't they, Dave? Teachers would love to have the help of other colleagues to show them, teach them, mentor them on how to deal with learning behaviour, which is often a problem in class.

Having been in one committee where we were dealing with the issue of alcohol, the effects of drinking alcohol, what that does to students and how it is that students behave in ways that you cannot tell there's a learning disability, we have never once, in the eight years the Conservative government was there, said, "This is a problem." There are 100,000 students affected by the problem that alcohol causes when mothers are pregnant. We never once heard the government say, "We're going to help teachers understand and identify the possible manifestations of the syndrome of alcohol drinking in a way that, having detected it, they would know what to do with those students."

What do we say? We say those students are disruptive and have a behavioural problem, and then we kick them out. We kick them out for a week or two weeks because teachers can't cope with that problem, and that solves the problem.

How teachers would love to get the help they need to be able to better identify a learning problem or a behaviour problem, because in learning how to deal with it, they're going to be able to teach that student better. They're going to be able to control the class better, and

they're going to have the time to better teach that individual and that class.

There's so much abuse going on in so many homes. It could be of a sexual nature or of a psychological nature. How much help would a teacher want and need to be able to identify those problems and help those students deal with those social, psychological and, sometimes, economic problems. But they don't have the resources, the time, the training or the mentoring to adequately deal with that. Not once did the Conservative government bring concrete proposals that would deal with that.

Yes, the Liberals are talking about mentoring programs, but one year after their election we have nothing. I suspect the Liberals will find something for us to debate in due course: if not this year, then next, or, I'm certain, just before the election.

I do have some concerns, because connected with the professional learning program was the requirement that new teachers would have to write a test. I personally think this test that new teachers have to take is almost useless. Why do I say that? Because new teachers coming into our educational system today are much better prepared than ever before: better prepared than I was as a teacher, better prepared than Dave and better prepared than a couple of other teachers I know in this room. The training my daughter got as a teacher at Ryerson Polytech is far superior to anything I got through my learning at U of T and my one year at the faculty of education—far superior.

We would require them to write a test to do what? The failure rate is so minuscule that it's pointless to force teachers to pay for and write this test. But the Tories loved the idea of testing, because they could say to the public, "We're testing teachers." I have a worry that the Liberals might continue with that test. I don't believe I've heard any Liberal speak about that. Maybe they will, but I want to alert them to this problem, and I want to tell them that.

On August 16, the Liberals floated their discussion paper, and their solution may be Liberal teacher-testing schemes. On page 16, they state: "Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and provincial education objectives."

I have a problem with that. Are the Liberals going to continue with that teacher test as a way of their ongoing connection with the Tory teacher test, as a way of reminding the public that they too are not backing away from the teacher test? I read this for Hansard, for those of you who are watching and for the Liberals who are in this chamber, because I suspect some of you don't know this. But maybe some of you ought to reflect on the implications of this, because I argue that testing a new teacher is simply a waste of money, and forcing a new teacher to pay, I believe, a \$200 fee is an egregious sum that they ought not to be paying.

Hopefully, in due course we will listen to other Liberal speakers and hopefully they will comment on this. If the

Liberal members themselves are a bit timid to touch the subject, hopefully we'll have the Minister of Education or the parliamentary assistant at some point speak to this issue, because I would be interested to know whether that's the same track you're pursuing or whether or not you want to end this notion of a teacher test that, in our view, is more political than pedagogical and that taxes teachers unnecessarily and forces them to pay sums of money on a test that I don't believe is necessary.

I'm looking forward to Liberals talking about the other ideas they might have, today or another day, on professional learning days: whether they think that what we have is adequate or whether they believe that two more days is adequate or whether they believe we should have more.

I'm looking forward to the day when Liberals will comment about the Ontario College of Teachers, where I know that Gerard Kennedy, in the debates I used to have with him on a regular basis, advocated what New Democrats advocated: that two thirds of the members of the Ontario College of Teachers ought to be teachers. I remember Kennedy agreeing with me. I didn't see that in the Liberal plan, but in the debates he agreed with me and pursued the same course.

I am looking forward to the time when Monsieur Kennedy, the Minister of Education, is going to come forth with a plan to deal with the Ontario College of Teachers. My hope is that there will be two thirds members of that organization who will be teachers. It is my firm belief that they ought to be, that teachers should be there, mindful of the profession; mindful of the qualifications that we expect of teachers; mindful of the fact that if we have teacher incompetence, they would be the first to say that those teachers need to go; mindful of the fact that the college of teachers is there not to protect teacher incompetence but to deal with it; that the Ontario College of Teachers ought to be there to develop professional learning and professional development courses for teachers because it's good for the profession, because it's good for the Ontario College of Teachers and it's good for individual teachers and everyone else.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, are you hinting that I have one more minute? I'll tell you, Speaker, that there is a lot yet to debate. I did want to talk about the issue of school closures as well, but we don't have enough time; we will on another day, when I get to finish my allocation here.

I urge people who have questions about the issues I raised to call me. Call me at Queen's Park if they want; call the constituency office: 603-1240. If you want to talk to me about Liberal manipulation around the issues of special ed, closing schools and busing, call us; we want to know.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Tuesday 19 October 2004

Mardi 19 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 18, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When the House last met to discuss Bill 100, the member for Trinity-Spadina had the floor and had concluded his comments. So I'll now move to questions and comments with respect to the remarks that have been made by the member for Trinity-Spadina. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Mississauga East.

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): The Dalton McGuinty government is taking us away from the mismanagement that we have seen over the many decades with the electricity sector, where we saw the previous government cap electricity at 4.3 cents, but in doing so, driving up our deficit by \$1 billion dollars. Those are things that we just can't do if we are to move forward in a responsible way and be open and transparent with the people of Ontario.

We don't want to play political games with our electricity. We know it's an essential service that everybody needs, especially at this time of year, as it gets a little colder here in our northern climate and those furnaces are coming on. So we're charting new ground here in this electricity sector in Ontario. We're moving forward in a very responsible manner, a manner that takes us away from, as I said, the mismanagement of this sector, in order to protect the best interests of all Ontarians.

Our plan includes a strong public leadership role, clear accountability and a coordinated planning approach to address the growing gap between electricity supply and demand in order to keep the lights on now and far into the future. We're putting Ontario back on a solid footing

by taking a balanced approach, one that addresses, yes, the critical need for new supply, increased conservation, consumers' desire for price stability, the importance of public leadership and the need for private investment.

I thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill 100.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): In the couple of minutes—if I had 20 minutes, that would be very nice. I listened with interest to the member from Mississauga East. He talks about a very responsible manner, and mismanagement by the previous—what could be more irresponsible than the promise made by Dalton McGuinty to close every coal-fired plant in Ontario in the next couple years? What could be more irresponsible than that?

Some 25% of the baseload for electricity in the province of Ontario is provided by those plants. Modern technology available—we have Senator Kerry running for President of the United States, a Democrat, talking about clean coal. What is wrong with the Liberal government of Ontario that it won't even look at technological advances, that it won't take its head out of the sand and see the possibilities in the province of Ontario?

Instead, they want to endanger our economic growth, to say to the auto manufacturers and all the people who work in that industry, and the parts industry in Ontario, the steel industry at Algoma, in Sault Ste Marie, in Hamilton and Dofasco, "You will not have the power you need because—ideologically, not rationally—we, the Liberal government of Ontario, want to make sure that we keep at least one of our promises."

1850

I tell you, this is a promise they shouldn't keep, and I won't criticize them at all if they break this promise. Go ahead and break the promise. It's the right thing to do. We beseech you on this side of the House to break the promise for the workers of the province. The Minister of Labour is sitting there—my goodness—who is responsible for the workers of the province of Ontario. They want work, Minister. Don't close the coal-fired plants without a plan.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Of course, the member from Trinity-Spadina, Mr Marchese, spoke to this bill. Unfortunately, it was last night, and to those folks who weren't able to watch and listen to the speech—and I was proud to have my colleague speak to this bill—I invite them to call Mr Marchese's office here at Queen's Park. They can get a transcript of it or a videotape of the speech.

Look, it's well worth heeding, because Mr Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, focused a great deal on the fundamental need to engage in aggressive, meaningful and sustained conservation programs. He made that very clear.

He also talked very clearly about the folly of privatization of electricity in this province, the fact that it's going to drive rates through the roof. Who's going to suffer? Seniors? Our folks? Our grandfolks? Young families? Who's going to suffer? Those minimum-wage workers who got nothing but a kick in the head from this government when it came time to increase the minimum wage? Who's going to suffer? The people on ODSP, who are insulted with the 3% increase in ODSP.

So I tell you, there's nobody in our caucus who has a better handle on hydroelectricity than the member from Trinity-Spadina, but for our leader, the member for Kenora-Rainy River. Howard Hampton, in approximately four minutes' time, is going to be speaking to this bill with his leadoff speech. He'll be on around 7 o'clock. Howard Hampton will be on with a one-hour address, analyzing the state of hydroelectricity in the province today, its past and its future.

Howard, of course, is the author of *Public Power: The Fight for Publicly Owned Electricity*. It's available at Chapters, Indigo and other bookstores. Howard Hampton will be here in four minutes' time, at 7 o'clock. I invite and encourage people to listen to what Howard Hampton has to say about hydro, this government's commitment to private hydro, and the NDP's demand for ongoing public ownership of Ontario hydro.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to comment after the illustrious performance of our friend from Trinity-Spadina, whose words are always welcome. I'm always proud to be in the same chamber with the honourable member, as he speaks so eloquently about his concerns.

He spoke in passing about his concern for conservation, and there's nothing more important to conserve than human lives. I find it shocking that some members of this House would refer to the commitment to shut down the coal-burning plants as being irresponsible. There's nothing irresponsible about saving the 1,900 lives that the Ontario Medical Association, an independent, arm's-length third party, claims are lost every single year as a result.

That's the direction we want to go in, and I know the member from Trinity-Spadina agrees with that. In fact, ironically, even the member who spoke about the irresponsible promise and his party were prepared to go that route too, except they were going to delay it another 15 years. That's a lot of lives. So I know the member from Trinity-Spadina understands that.

He spoke a lot about conservation, and I'm pleased to say that's one of the main pillars of our legislation. We're very concerned that we, in fact, are raising a generation of Ontarians who understand the importance of conservation, that a kilowatt saved is one that we don't have to spend money to invent.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes to reply.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm going to race through my comments, because I've got so much to say. First, our leader, Howard Hampton from Kenora-Rainy River, is going to be speaking, I suspect, within one hour. So those of you interested in this political forum, stay tuned.

Mr Kormos: Or come back in 30 minutes.

Mr Marchese: Or come back, exactly, in approximately one hour.

Two other comments: One, the member for Mississauga East said, "We are charting new ground." New ground, I say? Two years ago McGuinty said, "We support the private sector getting into this game." In 2003 he said, "The private sector is dead. The market is dead." In 2004 he gets elected and he resuscitates the private market. He says, "The market is alive again." Charting new ground? I don't know. Check that one out.

Third, to complete my remarks around this whole issue: The government's commitment to renewable energy and conservation is minimal. Their commitment is 5% of Ontario's electricity from renewable energy by 2007 and 10% by 2010, and only 5% demand reduction through conservation by 2007 and 10% by 2010. It's minimal, and I'm not even sure they're going to get there with the kind of commitment they're making.

The Pembina Institute says the following. The cost of new generation to replace retiring capacity is \$32 billion between 2004 and 2020, compared to an \$18-billion cost to the equivalent in conservation energy.

The point is, we need a strong commitment in conservation and a commitment to renewable. This bill gives us so little. In fact, it gives us nothing by way of how we reduce cost. We can't rely on nuclear. Every nuclear reactor we try to replace costs \$1 billion and \$1 billion more. We need a commitment for conservation and renewables.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the hydro bill?

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's good to see you again. Before I begin, I would like to share with you that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Peterborough. The other thing I'd like to mention, particularly to all my government friends, is that I am fortunate that I have a very dear friend, my business partner, Jeff Keller, in the gallery over here. Jeff, I just want to let you know we're very pleased you're here visiting us today. Jeff is from Exeter, from the great riding of Huron-Bruce. His member is here providing support.

In the brief amount of time I have, I want to talk about Bill 100. I want to let you know I categorically disagree with the member from Whitby-Ajax, because yet again he has that pessimistic frame of mind. He is so well known across this great province as someone who's a pessimist. He looks at this and says, "Oh, you can't close the dirty coal-fired."

The reason I support Bill 100 is this is going to be wonderful for farm economics in this province. As you know, Perth-Middlesex—I like to say the most productive rural riding in the entire Dominion—some parts of it are suffering. The member for Peterborough knows this. There are parts that are suffering. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex knows this as well.

With Bill 100, we could revolutionize farm economics in this province, and I'll tell you why. It's because I've been able to get out into my riding and I want to tell all of the members about WAMM Energy. There's a bunch of Mennonite farmers in my riding near Britton, Ontario. Mr Speaker, I know you know it well. WAMM stands for Weaver, Abner, Merle and Melvin. I was there with the member from Etobicoke Centre, who is the chair of the parliamentary assistant's conservation action team. We went out there to see that farm. They've been able to recondition a wind turbine. They've put it up on their farm; it's quite breezy there. I know Perth and Huron counties are particularly well suited for wind. They're creating clean energy.

Because of Bill 100, we are going to be able to have something called net metering. On a windy day, those farmers are going to be able to turn around and not draw upon the grid but actually use all the power they need from the wind and sell it back to the rest of us in Ontario in a clean fashion.

The possibilities for farm economics in this province are vast. There are people with old-style thinking, who somehow think we should be burning all these dirty coal fossil fuels, but I'm one who believes that with this challenge, with this opportunity that's been presented to us to really have to replace almost the entire power generation grid in the province of Ontario—we're talking about power generation, because I remember back in the old days, of course, Ontario Power Generation really just stood for "Ontario patronage generation." I remember that. The previous government had all of their friends over there. And what did we get left with? Billions in debt.

1900

What we have to do is fix that problem, because people don't want the lights to go out. If the farmers of Ontario, the agricultural community in this province, can be part of that solution, that would be a wonderful day. All of that, ladies and gentlemen, and my friends out across Ontario and all the farmers who are watching, is impossible without this bill. I want you to take note of every member of the opposition who stands up and votes against this bill, in support of dirty coal rather than having energy come from your farm.

We're on the verge of being able to have anaerobic digestion of nutrient, of manure. We could take the manure on the farms, something that we're well known for generating on the farm and here in this Legislature, and what we're going to be able to do is turn that into clean, pathogen-free water; dry, odourless nutrient; and methane, which is burned to create energy.

Could you imagine the day that your farms in your riding—the farms in Peterborough, the farms in Huron-Bruce, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and Perth-Middlesex—could become part of that solution, to change the economics of agriculture. I say to all the people who follow this debate, pay very, very close attention to how the NDP votes and how the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario votes on Bill 100, because they would vote for the dirty-coal lobby in this province over farmers any day. I can't believe it, but they're actually coming into this House—and they're proud of it; they're proud that they would rather vote for dirty coal than for farm economics, for a revolution.

I look forward to supporting this bill, and I yield my time to my good friend the member for Peterborough.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Peterborough to continue the debate.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have an opportunity to say a few words about Bill 100 this evening. Mr Speaker, as you're aware, I had the opportunity to chair the standing committee on social policy and had the opportunity, along with you and other members—Mr Hampton was on the committee—to listen to what I would consider a very wide diversity of individuals who made presentations to our committee with regard to this bill.

I think there are a couple things that are clearly evident in Ontario today, with our experience of the last few years. We do need some additional capacity in terms of providing the power that farmers, small business people, large businesses and the ordinary individual householder need to carry on with our day-to-day activities. One of the things I think that government certainly has to do is provide a framework so that we can ensure a stable, reliable and efficient electricity supply to the citizens in this great province.

I come from Peterborough, and Peterborough is the home of the nuclear products division for GE Canada. Over the years, of course, they've been very involved in the nuclear side of the business in Peterborough. They build the fuelling machines and the fuel bundles that have been used in Darlington, Pickering and Bruce. Over the years, GE has also been involved on the export side with the federal government in developing and working on reactors in China, Romania and India. So we have a long history in the power generation department at GE Canada in Peterborough.

I'll get to the bill here. I think, when you look at it, all political parties in the last 20 years have been in power in Ontario—the Peterson government, the Rae government, the Harris-Eves government—and I think it's pretty evident that none of those three administrations really have come to grips with the power situation in Ontario. Indeed, they tinkered around the edges. Some would say there was a fair degree of political involvement in electricity in the province of Ontario.

I happen to think that Bill 100 sets us on a new course, an opportunity to provide that reliable supply that GE needs in Peterborough to manufacture, that Stelco needs,

and Chrysler in Brampton and Ford in Oakville, the kinds of things that having an electricity supply will do to drive our economy in the next few years.

When I look back, there's a bit of a sorry history. I remember when Maurice Strong was running Ontario Hydro for the NDP government. He expended a lot of money buying that rain forest in Costa Rica. During his term in office, I'm told, a lot of the nuclear expertise that was at Ontario Hydro at that time was let go, valuable people who probably would have been able to help us along the road.

They also cancelled the Conawapa project, which was going to be the Manitoba lifeline that was successfully negotiated by the Peterson government as a way to solve and enhance the long-term picture of providing electricity in Ontario.

Then we had the Harris-Eves administration, with that sort of deathbed repentance where they decided they were going to embark upon the Manitoba lifeline. Essentially, if the Peterson initiative had been allowed to go to fruition, we would have had the additional supply we need in Ontario today.

When I look at this bill, there are so many positive things about it. It's going to protect heritage assets in Ontario, which we are committed to doing, keeping Beck, the nuclear side, the Saunders dam down the St Lawrence, those key assets, along with the nuclear part of it, that will be our baseload for Ontario.

We plan to enhance it through green power. We've been overwhelmed with the response so far. People have come forward who want to provide additional megawatts in Ontario through green power. I know that in my part of Ontario there is a real opportunity for windmills. I know for a fact that the GE operation in Peterborough may be a prime candidate to be involved in windmill technology to provide more jobs to my good friends in the CAW in Peterborough. Just to quote the CAW, there is an interesting quote that I'd like to get on the record from Mr Nick De Carlo. I remember, as you do, Mr Speaker, Mr De Carlo very well because he made a presentation to us when we were in Orono. I quote:

"Bill 100 proposes some important improvements for the generation and supply of electricity in the province. It is significant and important that the new electricity legislation proposes to reintroduce planning"—I stress "planning"—"into the system. It is also important that the act gives a legislative mandate to promote conservation and the expansion of renewable energy. These are positive steps."

One of the things we have to great advantage in Peterborough is Bob Lake. Bob Lake is known throughout Ontario as Mr Energy. He spent a period of time with Ontario Hydro. He came to Peterborough to run the Peterborough Utilities Services, which is owned by the city of Peterborough. Bob has been at the forefront in areas like smart meters and conservation initiatives.

Let me talk about conservation initiatives for a moment. This is one of the foundation blocks of our legislation. One of the ways we can address the supply

problem is through conservation. If each of us does our little bit, we'll have lots of electricity for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: That was an illustration of the enthusiasm the government caucus has for this bill, that between the two of them they couldn't even fill up a 20-minute speaking spot, and that's after briefings coming out of their ears. That's after briefing notes. That's after audiotapes they could play to themselves in their cars on the way to and from Queen's Park. This is the enthusiasm of this government's backbench for this bill, that in the course of debate two members can't even fill up a 20-minute slot. I've got to confess that I'm shocked.

1910

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Anemic at best.

Mr Kormos: God bless. Howard Hampton points out it's anemic at best in terms of the enthusiasm and commitment.

The fuel gauge is pretty close to empty in terms of what these government members have got to say about their own legislation. I know that they're not going back home praising it, because when they're back home, they're ducking and weaving and bobbing because folks are complaining to no end about things like electricity prices that are going through the roof and the fear of more. Folks are complaining to no end about things like auto insurance premiums. Never mind not being reduced by 10%, they continue to rise and rise and rise while people get lower and lower levels of coverage. Folks are complaining about a minimum wage that was increased by but a few pennies an hour after eight or nine years of nothing. Folks are complaining about their friends, sisters, brothers, fathers, mothers, who, on disability pensions, got themselves but a 3% increase in ODSP after—what?—eight years of zip, zero.

My goodness, there is a paucity of enthusiasm from the government benches for their own legislation—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I just want to reiterate what the member from Perth-Middlesex has said about renewable energies and renewable—

Interjection.

Mrs Van Bommel: I think it's very exciting. I think it's a very great opportunity for rural Ontario and for agriculture itself. We are well behind the European nations in terms of dealing with renewable energies. We can do so much more, and we can take a lot of lessons from what they're doing.

I've actually had the opportunity to go and see methane production turned into power at a garbage dump. It's a good way to recycle and reuse something that we have to deal with anyway, and there's no reason why we can't be taking the opportunity and using this now.

One of the things the member for Perth-Middlesex spoke about was wind power and bio-digestion. All those types of things are very good for the rural economy and the agricultural economy. The only reason they haven't been taken up at this point was because of the problem of the cost. It cost more to produce than they could get into the market. It was also the issue of net metering. That opportunity wasn't presented to them at the time.

With these types of opportunities presented under Bill 100, we're going to see more uptake on these opportunities, and I think it's very important for us to deal with renewable energies. We need to start looking very carefully at how we come to our energies and how we use them.

Conservation is an issue. We have old and deteriorating lines in rural Ontario. We need to fix those. If we're going to have economic development in rural communities, we need a power source. Under Bill 100, we're going to start seeing our own communities contribute to that source, and I'm very happy about it. I can do nothing more than say that it's exciting. The member from Niagara, I believe—

Interjection: Niagara Centre.

Mrs Van Bommel: Niagara Centre. I want to let you know that I think it's wonderful.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting to listen to the members of the government talk about the price of electricity and electricity supply in this province when they ran on a platform of keeping the price of electricity at 4.3 cents per kilowatt—keeping the cap, as it was called. As soon as they got elected, they—

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: Yes, it was our idea, and we would have kept it, sir. When we talked to the people of Ontario, we kept our word. We told them one thing, and we did the same thing. We were the government that was known for keeping its promises. But the first thing you did was change your mind. First you changed your mind and went from 4.3 to 5.6 or 4.7. I mean, the people of Ontario don't know what they're paying now. It's a sliding scale. You misled the people of Ontario. You got elected under false premises. So listening to this debate—

The Acting Speaker: I have to caution the member for Halton not to suggest that anyone is misleading the House.

Mr Chudleigh: Did I say something—I withdraw it if I said something that crossed the line, Mr Speaker. I got a little excited about the way in which this government got themselves elected under promises that failed to materialize. Is that OK? OK. Thank you very much.

They talked about agriculture, and of course agriculture has a long and proud history in Ontario of finding a way to become more efficient on the farm. It was during the 1930s, 1930 to 1934, when the rural electrification program was put into place, when electric power was brought to all the farms in Ontario—most of the farms in Ontario; certainly all the farms in southern Ontario at that time. I'm pleased to say that my grandfather was Minister of Agriculture at that time and he

implemented that rural electrification program, which was also a bit of a make-work program during the most severe years of the Depression. I see I'm out of time. In my next two minutes I'll bring it up again.

Mr Hampton: I listened with interest as some of the Liberal members tried to pretend that Bill 100 is somehow going to provide extensive economic development opportunities for farmers, tried to pretend that farmers will somehow be able to establish a wind turbine on their property and sell electricity into the grid. It's passing strange, because I had a meeting just a few weeks ago with the Ontario wind energy association. This is the association that represents all those people, not corporations, but many of them small rural landowners, who are very critical of Bill 100. They say that in fact it doesn't provide any opportunities for small landowners.

Its whole alternative energy strategy, if you read the outlines of the government's request for proposals, is all aimed at the corporate providers. So someone who has large-scale capital, someone who can take on a heavy burden of risk, someone who can access tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars of financing, may have an opportunity for wind energy, wind turbines. But if you're a small farmer who has a limited income, and especially nowadays virtually no access to credit given the financial crisis that's already happening in rural Ontario, you're basically written out of the picture. So I caution the Liberal members: Before you go too far down this road, you'd better check the provisions of the bill again, because it's certainly not as you say, according to the Ontario wind energy association.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. One of the Liberal members has two minutes to reply. There have been four questions and comments. One of the members who spoke to the bill has two minutes to reply. I recognize the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for Peterborough for sharing time with me and also for the comments made by the members for Niagara Centre, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Halton and Kenora-Rainy River.

There are two things that I wanted to speak on. Again, I say to my colleague the member for Halton, are you going to support this bill or not? Are you going to vote for the farmers in your riding who want to be able to sell power into the grid using net meters? Are you going to be able to do that? Are you going to go for renewable energy or are you going to say we need to be burning coal? Because I know what the farmers are saying in my riding. What they're saying is that they want to be part of it.

I say to my colleagues from the NDP, who have that certain mixture of sanctimonious negativity, that there are some farms in this province that are doing well. There are many that are hurting; there are many that are doing well. But do you know how they create the solutions they have in rural Ontario? Through co-ops. The member for Kenora-Rainy River again shows, I think, a certain lack of understanding of what happens in the vibrant agri-

cultural community that we have in Ontario. We have a history of farmers coming together.

The member for Halton and his grandfather would understand, of course, that farmers band together and form co-operatives as they have done right across the history of this province, and that's how they come together. Those are the farmers in my riding and that's what they're talking about. I know they're talking about that in Huron-Bruce, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Peterborough. The farmers want to be part of the solution. They don't believe that we should be trying to find a way not to comply with Kyoto, trying to find a way where we're increasing nitrous oxides and sulphur dioxides. They want to help find renewable, clean sources of energy—wind and methane. These can revolutionize farm economics. Again, I say to the opposition, you have a choice: Are you going to vote for the farmers, are you going to vote for that possibility, or are you going to vote for the old technology, a way that we've dealt in this province that has left us in not a very good place?

1920

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 100.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise and join the debate this evening on Bill 100. There are a number of points that I wanted to bring up, I guess, about the way this bill was entered into in the Legislature, the current situation that taxpayers, businesses and farmers find themselves in with respect to hydro supply and hydro pricing in the province of Ontario, and to give an additional perspective as to what the good people of Erie-Lincoln have said to me about their concerns on hydro supply and hydro pricing.

I appreciate the member for Perth-Middlesex's points in his presentation, but I think he presents a false choice. I don't think it's a choice between coal and the farmers suddenly filling up the gap. In fact, I get the opposite view. If the member can show me where the OFA supports the Liberal government's hydro policies, I'd enjoy his presentation.

I say to the member that I find that farmers, by and large, are highly critical of the hydro policy that has been brought forward. I was at a greenhouse just yesterday, Monday, down in—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Pardon me? Well, I won't respond to that suggestion.

It's a greenhouse for cut flowers, a significant industry in Ontario but particularly in Erie-Lincoln, in the western part of the riding more so—a major employer, a major source of investment in the area. They think the hydro policy is nuts, closing down Nanticoke. I wish my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant were here. He could tell me exactly the likely tens of millions of dollars in lost salaries in the Nanticoke area, all the way down to Dunnville, down to Wainfleet, down to Port Colborne. Employees at Nanticoke face being kicked out of their jobs. They're not happy about this. The farmers talk about the impact that is going to have on the local

economy, first and foremost. They don't understand, if coal contributes 20% or 25% at peak, or even higher, to our energy supply, and if the replacement supply is not yet available, why it would make sense to close that down. The economic impact is a concern, but also the replacement supply is a concern.

If you look at the way the people responded in the Nanticoke area, it strongly suggested that this notion the Liberal government could close down the coal plants by 2007, I believe, is yet another promise waiting to be broken. I say to the member for Brant, I think it's on the endangered promises list, right up there near the top. Put it right up near the top on the endangered promises list.

If I recall, at a recent Liberal caucus session, I believe, or a Liberal Party session, that was one of the items reported for debate. I don't know exactly how it was phrased. It was something to the extent of, "How do we get out of our promise to close down coal by 2007?" The member from Halton probably remembers this. It was in the papers. The Minister of Energy was forced to come out and say, "No, no, no. Whatever we considered on our agenda for discussion"—

Mr McMeekin: It was a brief that was raised for discussion.

Mr Hudak: I think it was a briefing—

Mr McMeekin: It was a brief that was raised by one of the participants.

Mr Hudak: The way I heard it described, it was a briefing note for discussion.

I say to the member opposite, I've got to believe that this is one of the items you've discussed extensively in caucus with your party. Are you going to keep the 2007 closure promise?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I'm not going to hold my breath, but I believe sooner or later, as part of Dalton McGuinty's next broken promises rehabilitation tour, he'll say, "Boy, you know what? We broke 37 promises in the first year. We wanted to have a clean slate in the second year, a resolution in the new fiscal year that all the broken promises are behind us. But, darn it, I gotta keep breaking more." It's just in the blood. I think it's just in the blood. It's the nature of the beast, so to speak.

I think Dalton McGuinty is well-intentioned. I think he's a good family man. I think he tries to be a strong Premier. I just think that it's a segment of weak leadership when you make promises, cynically, that you had no intention of keeping and then, once in office, cynically break those promises one by one by one. It's an appeal to try to win as many votes as possible. Granted, it's difficult for governments to win consecutive majorities, let alone three consecutive majorities. They were well-placed just by the nature of that phenomenon in our political system, but nonetheless Dalton McGuinty, out of weak leadership, still put out a whole range of campaign promises that I think he had no intention of keeping.

Maybe they're going to keep this one. I've got to think—and Brant marked it down. It's at the top of the

endangered, Dalton McGuinty soon-to-be-broken promises list, this coal promise.

I think what farmers want—sure they want to contribute. The member from Kenora-Rainy River spoke out quite clearly about what I'm hearing in my own riding, that they would love to supply power to the grid. They would love to build the windmills to supply your co-gen facilities. They're having a heck of a time with the bureaucracy involved. I'm not seeing them pop up at the rate that I think the government would have you believe is happening. Mr Speaker, perhaps in your own riding of Wellington you're not seeing the supply that they claimed was going to be occurring in rural Ontario. The member from Kenora-Rainy River talked about the wind energy groups being skeptical; I don't blame them. I don't see a solution in Bill 100 to that situation.

So this bill was borne out of one of the earliest—now classic—broken promises of maintaining the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, I think until 2006. I don't want to remind the members about that broken promise, but it has attained a—there are so many broken promises, I think you need to put them in particular categories. This ranks among the classic broken promises. When people think about their top five broken promises by Dalton McGuinty, if they try to get it down to a brief list, as opposed to the extensive list—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The list is longer. It's over 231.

Mr Hudak: The list is quite long, as my colleague says. But I think if they had to put Dalton McGuinty's greatest hits of broken promises, the broken promise on hydro pricing would probably be among the top five. It combines higher hydro prices, higher taxes, a punishing health care levy that could work out to up to \$1,000 for a working family in the Niagara region, an increase in fees—I think there were 50 different fee or tax increases in the most recent budget. And do you know what? I'm not getting the calls. I don't believe that auto insurance has come down 20%, as was promised by the Dalton McGuinty government. I'd ask my colleagues who are listening intently to my speech—I don't hear that they've met that promise.

So is it harder to live in Ontario after a year of Dalton McGuinty? No doubt. No doubt about it. Yes. Blatantly, yes. There's a lot less money in your pocket than had existed about one year ago. Certainly, the increase in hydro prices is part of it.

It is hard to look back without a great deal of research and think of all the different positions that the Dalton McGuinty Liberals had on hydro restructuring, with respect to OPG, with respect to transmission, with respect to prices. So the fact that they changed their minds once they got in office, I think, is perfectly consistent with their behaviour in opposition of taking different views. So I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. I just figured you would keep that promise because it was such a prominent promise that impacts everybody in the province of Ontario.

I wonder what they'll do in Atikokan at the closure. I talked about Nanticoke, which impacts my riding of Erie-Lincoln. In Atikokan, the closure—a small municipality that has had some difficult times with its own manufacturing sector. I don't know what the replacement job strategy is going to be by this government with respect to Atikokan; I don't think there is one. Maybe Lakeview. I do wonder, of this 2007 promise, how they're actually going to say they kept it, because they always look for some way of at least nodding or winking in the direction of their campaign promise. Maybe they will say the closure of Lakeview meets their campaign promise, but I think that falls well short of the expectation of the general public.

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Mr Dave Levac (Brant): It's Bill 100, correct?

Mr Hudak: Yes.

One wonders, too, under Bill 100, with new supply, gas generation, if they do close the coal plants—I don't think they're really going to live up to that promise, but let's say they do, and it goes to gas-fired plants—what the impact on the price of gas will be. Let's assume that you replace the coal with gas-fired. The impact on home heating costs is going to be phenomenal.

Interjection: Astronomical.

Mr Hudak: Astronomical, some might say. So yet another hit in the pocketbook. I would mention auto insurance, taxes, fees, higher hydro rates and, in combination—they do go down this path—higher gas rates as well.

I think my colleague, the critic for energy, the member for Durham, has spoken about this and would know far more than I, in his capacity as critic and all-around smart fellow.

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: Both. It's ubiquitous that he is consummate in his knowledge. I think he's raised some important criticisms of the bill that I've read. I was here last night. He spoke very well about it.

I think the NDP makes this point. I wonder if all of the voters who marked a ballot for the L, for the Liberal candidate last time around, were aware that the plan was for private generation, including potentially private nuclear facilities, in Ontario.

Mr McMeekin: You can't do that.

Mr Hudak: Was it clear at election time that the Liberals, if they formed the government, would be encouraging private sector supply of power?

Interjections: No.

Mr Hudak: Some other witnesses here, who I know to be good and honourable members, say no. I will take their word for it, because I certainly do not believe that they clearly told taxpayers in the province, and voters, that they would be bringing in a private sector supply of power.

Mind you, that's a good thing. I think that's important. I don't think the government is the right entity to be bringing on the new supply. I think you have to open up to private sector investment. I think that's really the only

solution that exists. It's a legitimate policy, one that I support.

My point is, was that part of their campaign? Did the candidate who had the red colours, the red signs in Wellington, go around saying, "We're going to invite private sector power supply"? Because I suspect there was a bit of a wink, a bit of a nod, a bit of leg shown, saying no, it was all going to be public power.

One area I'm concerned about too is the third generator at Beck. They made an announcement recently—I know the member from Niagara Falls was there as part of it—to increase capacity in the tunnel at Beck 2. Great.

Mr O'Toole: It was our solution.

Mr Hudak: It was. The member from Durham said it was our solution. That's true. We had moved forward with that process. There was an RFP on the way. John Baird, the energy minister, who, by the way, had a very soft spot for farmers and understood the impact of price on farmers and helped them to protect their agricultural sector from price spikes, had made that announcement, that commitment.

But we need to look closely at the language, and according to the Brantford Expositor on May 30, 2003—so in the run-up to the 2003 election—then leader of the opposition and now Premier Dalton McGuinty said, "A third generator will be added to the Beck generating station in Niagara Falls"—not an additional tunnel, but a third generator, meaning Beck 3.

If it were true, great news: a tremendous source of jobs in its construction, major investment in the Niagara region, and a major investment in new supply and on-going employment in the peninsula, a solid project—one that Dalton McGuinty, the Brantford Expositor and I suspect other journals committed to. Then once in office, on December 1, 2003, in Hansard, the Energy Minister, Mr Duncan said, "We believe that Beck 3 poses a huge opportunity for increased supply," in response to a question. "I say to the member opposite, this will be among the first new energy supply in 13 long and painful years," and then he takes shots at the other governments. "I say to the member and to his community, thanks to your efforts and the efforts of your community, be assured"—this is the important part—"that Dalton McGuinty and this government are going to proceed with that grid," but I think he means with that project, Beck 3, in his sentence. Hansard, December 1, 2003.

It may have been on Brant's endangered promises list because, sure enough, just over six months later, June 25, 2004, Dwight Duncan climbed down from that promise. The minister, in the Niagara Falls Review, said, "The Beck 3 project is not economic at this time. The science and economics of the project simply don't make sense. Very simply, there isn't enough water."

If the water level changed significantly in these past six months, people along the Niagara River didn't notice that. I suspect that the level of water in the Niagara River or the Great Lakes did not change significantly in those six months, but what changed was their commitment to keeping that promise. Again, before the election, they

made a promise to support Beck 3 because they knew it would be a major generator of jobs and investment in the Niagara region to win seats. Once safely in office, the cynically made promise was cynically broken by the minister on June 25, 2004. They pulled the plug on Beck 3. Another blatant broken promise, this one made specifically to the people of the Niagara Peninsula.

I know members opposite will get up and defend the bill and defend the policy. As I said, some things, like private sector supply of power, are important to the province. It guarantees supply. I pointed out some weaknesses that exist in the bill.

But don't take my word for it. Let me read you some headlines. Where will I start? I'll start in the Niagara Peninsula, the Welland Tribune, August 10, 2004: "Higher Hydro Prices Predicted for Ontario," contrary to election commitments, contrary to what we hear about this bill. But if it is between Liberals opposite, who have a record of breaking 37 promises already and more to come, and good journalists at the Welland Tribune, I will pick the Tribune, which says, "Higher Hydro Prices Predicted for Ontario," August 10, 2004.

The Niagara Falls Review, same date: "Power Price Expected to Climb: Hike Predicted When Rate Cap Lifted." In fact, I think the minister has mused about further rate hikes. Now, I don't know if that counts as an additional broken promise or the same promise broken a couple of times. They keep increasing prices. But I think I'll err on the generous side and count it as a broken promise.

The London Free Press: "Higher hydro rates predicted."

Interjection: It's a great paper.

Mr Hudak: Positive comments about the London Free Press from across the floor, but their headline suggests their view is at odds with what you hear Liberal government members saying about this bill.

A National Post comment, Tom Adams: "Bright Lights, Black Hole: Ontario's Bid to Centralize Power Authority Will Fail." I think Tom Adams is very dogged in his criticisms of aspects of Bill 100 and, with respect, the Liberal endangered promise of closing down the coal plants by 2007.

The Cornwall Standard Freeholder: "Real Power Problems Lie Ahead For the Liberals." Just down the highway, "The Lights Could Go Out on the Province's Future": the Kingston Whig-Standard, August 16, 2004. The Sudbury Star, to go around the province, in a sector near and dear to my heart, from the time that I enjoyed tremendously as minister responsible for northern development and mines—

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): You're such a northern member.

Mr Hudak: To the North Shore of Lake Erie, it's true, but it was an honour to serve as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In fact, I think, those who have had that opportunity, it's one of the best ministries in government; a problem-solving ministry. A great sector to work for. A chance for me to see, quite frankly, parts

of the province, coming from Niagara, I may not have always had a chance to see to the same extent.

Ms Smith: God's country.

Mr Hudak: And I do enjoy going back. The member from North Bay refers to it as God's country.

The Sudbury Star: "Mining can't afford hydro hike: ... Committee seeks public input on plans to bring in private electricity suppliers."

I think you've heard it. It's another broken promise. Bill 100 has too many holes. My comments on this piece of legislation.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: It's interesting. Here we have, from the official opposition, a member devoting his whole 20 minutes, as much time as the rules allow, to putting his position on the record. While it's not a position that, I tell you, I've had occasion to agree with—as a matter of fact, when he made reference to the Welland Tribune headlines saying, "Hydro Rates Sure to Rise," I wanted to make sure he identified that as being during the Tory years or subsequent to the last election, because I recall some of the similar Tribune headlines from those years when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were hell-bent on privatizing hydroelectricity here in Ontario.

I also remember Dalton McGuinty—well, some days he was in favour of privatizing hydroelectricity, some days he wasn't. If the sun shone, he was in favour, if the sun didn't shine, he wasn't. Gosh, if there was a full moon, he did, and if there was a quarter moon, he didn't. Dalton McGuinty campaigned, telling people he wasn't going to privatize hydroelectricity, but sure as God made little apples, once he got elected, we saw the privatization agenda, pedal to the metal, get put into fourth gear or fifth gear and just zooming along as fast as can be.

That's why I'm exceptionally proud of the fact that Howard Hampton is going to be addressing this bill in around eight minutes' time. I guess it'll be around five to eight when he gets to use his one-hour leadoff. Howard, of course, is the author of *Public Power: The Fight for Publicly Owned Electricity* here in Ontario, a book that thousands and thousands have read across the province, and it's available in Coles, Indigo, World's Biggest Book Store, Chapters and so on. Howard is going to be speaking to the need for this government to reverse its commitment to privatization and the need for this government to adopt the NDP agenda, the NDP platform, the NDP direction of publicly owned, non-profit, regulated hydro.

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak a few words on this subject. It was extremely interesting listening to my good friend from Erie-Lincoln talking about my riding and one of the greatest announcements that we've made since being elected.

I remember sitting on city council before I got here, and for 13 years we questioned why there was no opportunity to take advantage of a natural resource that we had in our community to generate more electricity. I

remember when I sat on council, I think at least twice the previous government announced they were going ahead with this project, prior to an election and then after an election. Of course, for those 13 years I was on city council, we never saw anything happen with it.

I also wanted to share with the House that, quickly after I was elected, I personally toured Beck and talked to a lot of the front-line workers there to get a feeling from them in regard to what was the best approach the government might look at in terms of generating electricity quickly and at a reasonable cost. One of the things I learned from those people who work on the front lines—they were explaining to me there was an opportunity with the current generating station. By bringing more water in through an additional tunnel, the government of the day could in fact produce electricity much quicker and at a very reasonable cost. They emphasized to me over and over, "Make sure you take that message back." That is something I was really pleased we were able to do. The tunnel is going ahead at \$600 million. The figure I recall is about 6,000 person years. Vince Kerrio, who was a cabinet minister with the Liberal government of the day, is extremely excited that we are now fulfilling that promise we made to the people of Ontario and, most importantly, to the people of my riding of Niagara Falls.

Mr O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Erie-Lincoln. We served this afternoon on the estimates committee, where he is the critic for municipal affairs. He's doing a wonderful job of holding Mr Gerretsen accountable.

I was impressed, and that's why I came in here tonight, because like Mr Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, I come from an agricultural riding. The member for Halton said earlier, if you think agriculture, you should always think the Conservative party is there for you. In terms of how this applies to me, I have greenhouse operations, livestock operations. Certainty in price and competitiveness are extremely important. I think I heard the minister say it's a mug's game and he can't protect consumers. Well, it's a fundamental policy of economics.

I've looked at the substance of their conservation plan in some detail. They cancelled the Energy Star program. Constituents of mine and yours were buying energy-efficient appliances. We gave you a rebate on your sales tax. Not only that, we had a 10-year property tax holiday on wind development. This was to encourage and incent alternative energy supply. The first thing they did, as Mr Hudak pointed out, was to cancel those incentives and encouragements and introduce Bill 4. This was done soon after they were sworn into cabinet. They increased the price by about 20%.

It's my understanding that if you look forward, there are only two consistent and reliable outcomes here: You're going to have less reliability and higher prices. As in all things, it can be traced back to their election promises. They will not deliver any more without your paying more. And I doubt if they'll deliver more; they'll just tax you more.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr Hampton: I listened with interest to my colleague the former Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I'm sure he learned a lot when he was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I'm sure he got to see part of the geography of Ontario that he didn't know existed until that time. I listened very carefully to what he said about what is going to happen to hydro prices. I think people across Ontario need to recognize this. Wherever you go, it doesn't matter—North America, Europe, Australia—the cost of private, profit-driven electricity in any jurisdiction is at least 20% more expensive than publicly owned, not-for-profit electricity. Why? As soon as you introduce profit, a private company will want at least a 15% profit. That gets added to your hydro bill. In addition, it costs hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions of dollars, to build new generating stations and new transmission lines. Private companies will borrow that money from financial institutions. Financial institutions will want at least a 2% higher interest rate when lending to a private, profit-driven company as opposed to lending to a publicly owned utility which has the government taxpayer standing behind it. That 2% on the interest bill gets added to your hydro bill. And when you're talking about borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars, paying that amount of money back over 10 or 15 years comes out to hundreds of millions of extra dollars added to your hydro bill. And then there are the corporate salaries. Make no mistake about it, Liberals have chosen private, profit-driven power, and that's going to increase the price by at least 20%, short- and long-term.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: Thank you to my colleagues from Welland-Thorold and Niagara Falls—it's a bit of the Niagara show tonight—Durham and Kenora-Rainy River.

I've got to tell you that while I sometimes will disagree with my colleagues to my left, Howard Hampton and Peter Kormos, they have been consistent with public power all the way. My God, they drilled it into my head during the campaign, and I got it at doors—public auto insurance and public power. They've been consistent.

I'll give Dalton McGuinty credit: He's been consistent in his inconsistency. I don't know if that's inconsistently consistent or vice versa, but he's been for private power, he's been against private power, whatever. It reminds me of a little skit I saw. We should ask Dalton. Do you know what? He'd say he was consistent, because when he was before a private power audience, he was in favour of private power, and the next night, when he was in front of a public power audience, by goodness, he was in favour of public power only. So he was consistent in trying to appeal to his audience but certainly has taken up a number of different positions. Once in office, all bets are off: 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour thrown out the window of the Premier's limousine once he got hold of those keys.

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I suspect, similarly, their promise to close down all the coal plants by 2007 will be out the window. I appreciate the remarks from my colleague from Niagara Falls, but Dalton McGuinty promised more. The tunnel is great. I'm glad to have it. We started that process. We got the RFP out there. They wrapped a red ribbon around it and announced it. But Dalton McGuinty said, clearly, a third generator will be added at the Beck generating station in Niagara Falls. Beck 3, the big project, big investment, big jobs; a big campaign commitment to win votes in Niagara and one big broken promise once Dalton McGuinty had the Premier's chair.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I will be using the one-hour leadoff because I have a lot to say on this bill.

Let me begin by saying what I think Liberal members appreciate already. New Democrats will not be supporting Bill 100. In fact, New Democrats could not be more strong and more vociferous in our criticism of this bill. And I want to use this hour to lay out why we are so critical of this bill.

This bill continues the great pretender tradition that the Premier set when he was in opposition. One day he was in favour of private power and the next day, speaking somewhere else, he was in favour of public power. This bill tries to convince the people of Ontario that we're going to continue to have a regulated hydroelectricity system, it tries to pretend that we're going to continue to have public power, when, in fact, what is involved here is privatization through the back door.

I was very critical of the Conservatives when Mike Harris and then, later, Ernie Eves set out to privatize and deregulate our hydroelectricity system. But I will give the Conservatives credit for one thing: At least they were open and up front about what they were trying to do. They said they believed in privatization and deregulation. They said it openly, and they even boasted about it.

Mr McGuinty and the Liberals want to pretend to people across Ontario that they're going to continue public power, but in fact this is an agenda of privatization through the back door. It is privatization by stealth, privatization by deception, but the result is the same. Industry's hydroelectricity bills are going to increase substantially, and it's not just Howard Hampton and the NDP who are saying that. Small business's electricity bills are going to increase substantially. Homeowner electricity bills are going to increase substantially. School electricity bills, hospital electricity bills, community centre electricity bills, hockey rink electricity bills and apartment dweller electricity bills are going to increase substantially. Let me say again why that's going to happen. It doesn't matter where you are in the world—in North America, in Europe, in Australia—if you sit down and compare and contrast the operations of privately owned, profit-driven electricity systems versus publicly owned, not-for-profit electricity systems, the private profit-driven systems on average cost 20% more, no matter where you are.

I explained a little earlier why that is. Profit-driven companies will want at least a 15% profit; they'll take more if they can get it. Add 15% to your hydro bill. If you're going to go out and borrow \$2 billion to build a new electricity generating station, private companies will have to pay a higher interest rate to financial institutions. Why? Because the financial institution says, "Well, you could go bankrupt. You could run into financial trouble, so you're a higher risk. Because you're a higher risk, we're going to charge you a higher interest rate." Borrowing \$2 billion and repaying that \$2 billion over 25 years—the interest charges alone will add hundreds of millions of dollars to the province's electricity bills.

There's another reason, though, why private power will be more expensive. I think, historically, people will remember that when the Conservative government, when Mike Harris said he was going to privatize Hydro One, which runs the transmission system and the distribution system in some parts of the province, right away the head of Hydro One, Eleanor Clitheroe, who had been making a salary of about \$450,000 running the publicly owned utility, as soon as the announcement was made that it was going to be privatized, Ms. Clitheroe immediately wanted and got a \$2-million salary, and wanted a \$1-million-a-year pension, a \$6-million severance allowance, a \$330,000-a-year limousine allowance, a \$174,000-a-year car allowance, plus an unlimited expense allowance.

And she wasn't alone. Every other senior and middle executive at Hydro One wanted the same things. Virtually overnight the salaries and benefits and bonuses and pensions and expense accounts of the senior and middle executives of Hydro One blossomed, as if they had won the lottery. And do you know what? That got added to people's hydro bill, and that's exactly what's going to happen again.

Private companies are not in the business of providing electricity because they want you or me to have good service. They are in the business to make as much money as they can, and that includes all of the executives and managers in the corporation. And that all gets added to the hydro bill. That's why, no matter where you are in the world, as soon as a government starts to move toward more private, profit-driven electricity, at least 20% will get added to the hydro bill.

There are other things the Liberals are doing which are further going to increase the hydro bill, and I want to talk about that. But I just say to folks, Mr McGuinty and the Liberals are practising the same agenda as the Conservatives: privatization of our electricity system. Whereas the Conservatives were up front and open about it, Liberals are going to practise privatization by stealth, privatization by the back door.

I said that it is not just me who says that there are going to be huge price increases. I want to cite the brief of the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario, because the association came before the Bill 100 committee and presented a detailed brief. In fact, they actually brought the representatives of three companies. They brought someone who spoke for Bowater pulp and

paper. They brought someone who spoke for Gerdau Ameristeel. Gerdau Ameristeel owns steel plants in Cambridge and in Whitby. Bowater has a pulp and paper mill/sawmill complex in Thunder Bay. And then they brought Falconbridge. Falconbridge is a major mining company in Ontario, especially in Timmins and Sudbury, but at different times has been active virtually across northern Ontario.

And this is what they said. They said, following their analysis of the McGuinty electricity plan, that we would see a further 30% increase in the price for industrial users, but likely as much as a 53% increase in the industrial price of electricity. They also admitted in their brief that during the time that the Conservatives set about to privatize our hydro system between 1999 and 2003, there had already been a 30% increase in the industrial price of electricity.

They were very blunt, Falconbridge, Bowater and Gerdau Ameristeel. They said, "Look, these industries which provide literally hundreds of thousands of good, secure jobs in this province"—in most communities, these are the best jobs. They're the jobs that carry job security, the jobs that carry a good, steady wage, that carry good pension benefits, that carry a good benefit package. They said that electricity prices that escalate as much as they are projecting will mean that many of their operations will shut down or some of their operations will curtail production and start moving production outside the province. In fact, Bowater, speaking for the pulp and paper industry, said this is already happening and, indeed, it is.

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A couple of years ago, after the 30% increase in the price of power under the former Conservative government, Abitibi-Consolidated shut down a paper machine in Kenora in my riding. One hundred and fifty five good-paying jobs, like that, gone. Just a year ago, Weyerhaeuser shut down a paper machine in the community of Dryden and also shut down their sawmill. Three hundred jobs. The best-paying, most stable jobs in the community, gone. Just after Bowater presented to the committee, they announced that they were shutting down one of their pulping processes in their forest products complex in Thunder Bay. Fifty jobs gone, like that.

Cascade papers: Five hundred and fifty jobs in Thunder Bay. Cascade came in and met with the minister. They met with the Minister of Energy. Not so much interested in meeting with the minister of trade and technology, not so much interested in meeting with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, they went right to the Minister of Energy and they said, "If there are further escalations in the price of electricity, very likely we will be closing down our paper mill in Thunder Bay." Five hundred and fifty jobs.

Falconbridge made the point that they are an industrial company and they're an international company. They have mines in Central America, South America, in Asia and they have operations in Europe. They have the capacity to move not just production, but things like re-

fining and smelting elsewhere in the world. They made the point that if the McGuinty government continues on the road that they're on in terms of their electricity policies, Falconbridge will begin shutting down or curtailing some of their operations in Ontario and moving them outside of Ontario.

Gerdau Ameristeel pointed out they have a steel plant in Selkirk, just north of Winnipeg—Manitoba has the lowest electricity rates in North America—but they also pointed out that they have mills in the southern United States, central United States and northeastern United States. They projected the price of electricity under Mr McGuinty's scheme and said, "Look, you would essentially make the two steel mills, one in Cambridge and one in Whitby, the highest-cost producers in the Gerdau Ameristeel chain in North America." They said they would take this as a signal to start moving production out of Ontario and into other jurisdictions. That means moving jobs and economic activity out of Ontario and into other jurisdictions.

This is very important for Ontario. I say to people across the province, the reason the electricity debate touches so many of us is because it has a very strong economic and industrial aspect. Yes, it has an important environmental aspect, and I want to talk about the environmental aspect in a minute, but there's a very strong industrial, economic aspect to the price of electricity. In fact, you could make the argument that the reason Ontario became an industrial powerhouse through the 1940s, the 1950s, the 1960s and into the 1970s is because Ontario had a guaranteed supply, a reliable supply and an affordable supply of electricity to power the pulp and paper industry, the mining industry, the steel industry, the auto assembly industry—you name it.

In fact, there are many historians who point to the incredible industrial production that happened in Ontario during the second war when Ontario, in many ways, became the major industrial supplier for Britain, whether it be airplanes or tanks or trucks or ships. Much of that happened because we had a public power system that provided electricity at an affordable rate, on a reliable and sustainable basis.

So we really are talking about one of the economic fundamentals of the province. I just say to people, when groups like the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario come forward and say that your electricity plan, the McGuinty electricity plan, spells real trouble for these industries, spells real financial and economic difficulty for these industries, and jobs and economic activity are at risk, government should listen. They were very blunt. They said 140,000 good-paying industrial jobs are put at risk because of this government's proposal as contained in Bill 100, your electricity strategy.

I think the government should listen, but obviously they're not going to listen. At least the people of Ontario should know that the major power consumers of the province are saying this. I urge people, if you want to get a copy of the major power consumers' brief, give me a call here at the Legislature or contact us by e-mail; you

can do that through your public library. I'd be happy to send you a copy of the brief. Everyone should have a copy of it, particularly if you live in one of the major industrial centres of Ontario, especially if you live in northern Ontario, because the industries of northern Ontario, whether pulp and paper, sawmilling, mining, smelting, refining or steelmaking—virtually all of the important industries in northern Ontario—are very electricity-intensive. They have to have that affordable, reliable supply of electricity, otherwise they just can't stay in business.

I also want to talk about the environmental aspect of this. The minister has put out a lot of press releases. In fact, what we're seeing more than a year into the McGuinty government is that they've yet to do anything on the electricity front. They've yet to produce any new supply. They've yet to say, "Here is the strategy going forward." What they've really done over the last year is simply issue press release after press release after press release. That's all.

The minister has put out a lot of spin about his concern for the environment. I was struck when a German environmentalist was here. He's also a Member of Parliament in Germany. He was here just a few short weeks ago speaking to a forum. To put it mildly, he was embarrassed by how little attention is being paid, first of all, to renewable energy and, secondly, he was embarrassed by the so-called conservation plan. Frankly, there isn't a conservation plan.

Let me give you an idea of why he was embarrassed. The government has put out a request for proposal for only 300 megawatts of renewable electricity, 300 megawatts of so-called new green power. In effect, the installed capacity here in Ontario right now is roughly about 30,000 megawatts. So if everything was up and running and everything was operating, we'd be capable of producing about 30,000 megawatts. Ten per cent of 30,000 is 3,000 and 10% of 3,000 is 300. So what's this government's commitment to so-called green renewable electricity? It's 1%, that's it. They're boasting about 1%. That's what they're boasting about.

Some of the Liberals want to talk about Conawapa. I just urge you to go back and read the Hansard. Do you know who the most vociferous critic of Conawapa was, who said that the province should get out of Conawapa right away because it was too expensive? Do you know who that was? It was the Liberal energy critic. And do you know who that was? Dalton McGuinty. In fact, in this House he said, "It doesn't matter what it costs. Get out of Conawapa. It's too expensive. We don't need the power."

Interjection: And your government listened to him.

Mr Hampton: I would say this: Bob Rae made a mistake. He listened to Dalton McGuinty; he did. He listened to Dalton McGuinty and that was a big mistake.

Interjections.

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Mr Hampton: I think I've incited a little bit of activity on the Liberal bench there.

Here is the interesting thing. The German parliamentarian who knows a lot about wind energy was here and he was embarrassed. But it's not just him who's embarrassed. I met with the executive director of the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, a gentleman from California who just moved here to Ontario because he had a lot of experience with wind turbines in California. And this is what he said: "I've looked at the Bill 100 provisions. I've looked at the requests for proposals for so-called green energy that the government's put out already, and do you know what? This doesn't provide any opportunity for farmers out there in rural Ontario who maybe want to have one wind turbine on their property." First of all, the amount of money you have to have to even be considered, the access to capital that you have to have to even be considered, the scope and size that you have to have to even be considered is beyond literally 99% of the farmers in Ontario. He said that this is aimed overwhelmingly at the corporate producers. So if you're TransAlta or ATCO and you've got access to hundreds of millions of dollars in capital and you can afford to take on this level of risk for 10 or 15 or 20 years, then you can bid. But for small farmers, for small landowners in rural Ontario, this is not an opportunity. If anything, it's a frustration. That's how people are feeling out there right now.

As well, I want to talk about the government's so-called strategy for conservation. We've heard this government give long-winded speeches about their so-called smart meters. But the interesting thing is that they ignore the experience with the so-called smart meters that happened in other jurisdictions. What I want to refer to is, of course, the experience of California. After California went down the privatization and deregulation road that Conservatives and Liberals are so in love with, Enron took advantage of people there, manipulated the market and drove up the price of electricity not by 10 or 15 times, but in some cases, by 40 times—increases in the price of electricity.

After the crisis in California, California was looking for all kinds of measures to reduce consumption. So they got into the so-called smart meter game. The governor of California actually did a report on the so-called smart meters in retrospect. What they were hoping was that smart meters would give them a 500-megawatt reduction in electricity use, that it would shift enough load so that they could shift 500 megawatts of load from the peak usage, which happens during the daytime, to the off-peak, which happens in the evening.

That's what they were hoping—500 megawatts. After a lot of expense installing the meters, you know what they found? They were only able to reduce peak demand by 31 megawatts through the use of load-shifting and smart meters. There's a reason for that, and the people at home should understand. Much of your electricity use in your home involves appliances that are on all the time. Your refrigerator is on all time and you can't—well I wouldn't advise you to—shut off your refrigerator for six or seven hours at a time. I certainly wouldn't advise you

to do it and then try to eat the food, because you would be a real target for food poisoning in that case. Similarly, if you have a freezer—and many people in Ontario do have freezers now. It's one way of taking advantage of meat prices and other food prices when they don't cost too much and then putting it in your freezer. But a freezer has to be on all the time, so you can't simply shut the freezer off during the daytime and then run it at night when electricity prices might be a little lower.

Similarly, if you have an electric hot water heater, it actually costs more if you turn the hot water heater on and then turn it off and turn it on and turn it off, because you're heating it and then you're heating it again and then you're heating it again, rather than maintaining it at a constant temperature.

If people think about it for a minute, much of our electricity use in our homes involves appliances that are on all the time. So saying, "Oh well, we're going to shift load," obviously doesn't apply to a lot of appliances. But equally, much of our activity is in the daytime. As I said to someone, human beings are not raccoons; we don't conduct most of our activities at night. Some we conduct at night, but most we conduct during the daytime. You're not going to get your kids up and send them to school at 1 a.m. Similarly, you're not going to get up at 2 a.m. and cook breakfast.

Much of our use of electricity is either dictated by appliances that are on all the time or dictated by our activities as human beings, by people who tend to get up in the morning, who tend to cook breakfast in the morning, who then go to work, who work all day, who come home in the evening, who cook supper in the evening and then do a whole round of other household chores. The idea that you can somehow shift load in the household to some great extent just doesn't bear up under scrutiny. That's what they found in California. It just doesn't work.

But that has been the sum total so far of the McGuinty government's strategy for electricity conservation. I listened carefully as some of the Conservative members spoke. The Conservatives did, in fact, put in place incentives for people to go out and buy energy-efficient appliances. It is true that, after they went down their own privatization-deregulation road and hydro bills went through the roof and people were angry and small business was angry and companies were laying off workers and paper mills were shutting down or shutting down some of their paper machines, the former Conservative government said, "Oops, we've got to do something here." They did implement an incentive strategy for people to go out and buy electricity-efficient appliances.

The Liberals have now rescinded that. They've done away with that. That's actually a step backward, because if we really are serious about reducing electricity use, those are the things that need to happen. If people have a refrigerator in their home that was built before 1994, then there's a 99% chance it's a very inefficient refrigerator; it's very inefficient in its use of electricity. Chances are it

uses four times as much as electricity as a refrigerator built after 1994.

In 1994, the then NDP government required all refrigerators going forward to be energy efficient, and if you couldn't manufacture an energy-efficient one, then don't manufacture. You would think that if the government was interested in really conserving electricity, they would have added to the incentives that were there, they would have gone to people and said, "Look, we're prepared to provide you with a low-interest loan, so even if you're a low- or modest-income family and you're struggling, we're going to give you a low-interest loan so you can buy that new refrigerator. Because it will use less electricity, your hydro bill will actually come down and then, by paying, say, \$10 or \$15 a month over a three- or four-year period, you could pay off the loan. Then anything else that you save on the electricity bill goes in your pocket."

That would be a real incentive plan for efficiency and conservation. Have we seen that? No. The only incentive that was there for people to purchase electricity-efficient appliances has been removed, done away with.

There are other options that could be employed as well. For example, if you look at the relative efficiency of an electric stove versus a natural gas stove, providing some incentive money for people to trade in their electric stove and get a natural gas stove would make wonderful sense, both from the perspective of saving on electricity and from the perspective of using the most efficient fuel in that context. And natural gas is the most efficient fuel for cooking. If anyone wants to try the experiment, take an electric stove, turn it on, take a natural gas stove, turn on a burner, and put cold water from the tap on both and see which one boils first. A natural gas stove will boil water much, much more quickly because the efficiency of the use of the energy is much higher with a natural gas stove. Is the government doing anything on that front? No; no incentive there either.

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So what we have seen so far in terms of wind energy is—and I use the words of the German critic who was here—it's embarrassing, it's shallow, it's hollow, it's superficial. What's happening on the energy efficiency and conservation front in terms of household appliances or in terms of retrofit strategy for homes? Nothing. The government talks only about smart meters, smart meters which were dismally unsuccessful in California in terms of their results. I said that this has real implications for Ontario's industry. It has obviously real implications for Ontario's environment. Whether you produce your electricity through nuclear fuel, whether you produce it through natural gas fuel, or whether you produce it through falling water, or whether you go down the energy efficiency road, it has huge implications for Ontario's environment.

Here again, very reputable organizations have sat down and examined the strategy. My colleague from Trinity-Spadina talked about this a bit last night, but I want to talk about the Pembina Institute. The Pembina

Institute is actually an organization in Alberta, in Calgary, where, as you know, there are lots of energy debates. The Pembina Institute, in their study, looked very carefully at what was happening. They released a report earlier this summer which pointed out that the cost of building new generation, in other words, if the McGuinty Liberals decide, "Oh, we're going to build lots of natural gas plants and refurbish the plants and build new nuclear plants," the cost of meeting Ontario's electricity needs that way between 2004 and 2020 will be \$32 billion.

They said if we pursued an energy efficiency strategy—and I outlined an energy efficiency strategy for homes and apartments; you could also outline one for small businesses, for community hospitals, for schools, for community centres and then for major industries, because there's an energy efficiency strategy for virtually all of these sectors of the economy—if we emphasized an energy efficiency and conservation strategy instead, the cost between 2004 and 2020 would only be \$18 billion and the result for the environment would be much better.

But have we seen an energy efficiency strategy and energy conservation strategy? No. We've seen lots of spin, but this government has actually backed away from some of the energy efficiency incentives that the Conservative government was forced to put in place. That, I say, is going to be to the detriment of all of us. It would be less costly to pursue an energy efficiency strategy. It would be more cost-effective to produce an energy efficiency strategy. It would be more efficient, by definition, to pursue an energy efficiency strategy. It would be better for the environment. Yet we do not see an energy efficiency strategy that has any weight to it, any substance to it. We have seen lots of paper, lots of public relations spin, but still no energy efficiency strategy.

There's obviously another very real aspect of electricity cost and provision for the people of Ontario, and it's a very painful aspect for people who are struggling on low and modest incomes. One of the things we saw when the former Conservative government deregulated the price of electricity in the spring of 2002 was that hydro bills more than doubled that summer and going into the fall. All kinds of people—seniors living on fixed incomes, folks who were trying to get by on a pension, people who had to rely on Ontario Works benefits or Ontario disability support benefits—were having their electricity shut off, disconnected, because the rate increase happened so quickly and was so substantial they couldn't pay the bill.

That's already starting to happen again. Last spring, the Liberal government, despite their promises during the election campaign, increased electricity rates substantially. In fact, we now know that that electricity rate increase took an extra \$20 million out of the pockets of the lowest-income Ontarians—\$20 million they didn't have. The government responded with a press release that said, "Oh, the government's going to provide energy

assistance of \$2 million." Well, \$2 million pales in comparison to \$20 million.

The government has a further price increase for electricity coming in about another six months' time. Roughly another \$225 million will be added to the hydro bill, so that's going to put low-income and modest-income families in this province in an even more difficult spot. I think one of the things the government has the do, which isn't in Bill 100—in fact, you can't find it anywhere—is have a strategy for helping people who have low and modest incomes deal with electricity prices that are obviously going to increase significantly.

We're not talking here about something that people can do without. If I can make the comparison, in a privatized market, if Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Honda and Toyota increased the price of cars by 50% tomorrow, as consumers, we'd have choices. We could say, "Well, I'm going to keep my old car and fix it up," or we could say, "I'm going to buy a second-hand car," or we could say, "We're going to carpool," or, if you have the option, take public transit, or some of us could simply say, "I'm going to walk, but I'll be damned if I'm going to pay 50% more for this car." You'd have a choice.

With electricity, you don't have a choice. This is an essential service. One of the realities for us is that this is a service that we need every day, and we all need it. You can't walk away and turn off your refrigerator. You can't walk away and turn off the freezer. You can't just walk away and operate your small business and not utilize electricity. You can't do that, yet the government doesn't have an answer, doesn't have a response for low- and modest-income people in this province who are facing much, much higher electricity bills.

We can't support legislation that would literally leave the poorest Ontarians, those Ontarians who are trying to live on fixed incomes, at the mercy of a market, a market which has already shown that the participants in the market are more interested in how much money they can make and much less interested in what happens to real people in terms of whether the lights come on, or whether they have enough electricity to power their refrigerator, or whether they can keep themselves warm on the coldest days of winter.

One of the other interesting things that happened during the Bill 100 hearings is we actually got to hear from some people who had done some work studying this. I want people to know about an economist from Britain. His name is Steve Thomas. He's a professor at the University of Greenwich. Mr Thomas is one of those people who pay particular attention to this whole issue of electricity supply and how electricity is provided.

So he actually sat down and studied the government's bill and their public relations announcements and their requests for proposals from A to Z. He did a detailed study. Not only that, but he's been to Brazil to study the failure of electricity privatization there. He's done a number of studies on the failure of electricity privatization in Britain. He went to Australia and New Zealand. New Zealand has had a horrendous experience with electricity

privatization, with major cities having to do without power for three, four or five months, with irregular supplies of electricity. He's looked at where electricity privatization has been tried in some of the European countries.

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His report really makes interesting reading, and I just want to read part of it, because everybody in Ontario ought to know this. After all, he's talking about our electricity system, our essential service. One of the points he makes is, "Experience elsewhere, especially Europe, suggests new capacity will be primarily gas-fired."

We've seen nothing from the Minister of Energy or nothing from his minions. I asked his high-powered officials the other day, when they appeared before the committee, if they had any answers, and I was surprised by the silence. In fact, you know what? I said, "You've put out this request for proposals for gas-fired stations. By now, you must have received some proposals from some of the companies that are interested in private profit-driven natural gas supply of electricity. You must have received some proposals from them, and they must have delineated for you what they're expecting, what the expected price per kilowatt hour would be."

The minister didn't have an answer. You'd swear the deputy minister was the cat that swallowed the canary. He didn't have anything to say. The assistant deputy minister had nothing to say. The branch director had nothing to say. You'd swear that I'd asked some difficult mathematical question and that they were all bewildered.

I know what the natural gas companies are saying and I know what the proponents of natural-gas-fired generation are saying. They want 10 cents a kilowatt hour wholesale. Then you add on the transmission charges, the distribution charges, the debt retirement charges, and some of the other fly-by-night operators who want a profit here, a commission there or a fee there, and you're looking at retail electricity prices of at least 12 cents or 13 cents a kilowatt hour—three times what the rate is now.

But what struck me was that a year into the McGuinty government, I asked that simple question, and the minister didn't want to answer it, the deputy minister either didn't want to answer it or couldn't answer it, the assistant deputy minister didn't want to answer it or couldn't answer it, and the branch director didn't want to answer it or couldn't answer it.

I think the people of Ontario have a right to expect more. You're talking about the essential underpinning of Ontario's economy, you're talking about something which has huge environmental implications for the province, you're talking about people's basic survival in terms of whether the electricity is going to be on when it's 30 below in northern and central Ontario, and the minister, the deputy minister, the assistant deputy minister and the branch director couldn't or wouldn't answer the question. These are some of the questions that the government is going to have to answer very quickly.

Let me tell you one of the other problems with Bill 100. The government has advertised this as them politically withdrawing from the electricity sector. Well, I challenge anyone. Read the sections, section by section by section. Right now, the price is set by the minister. Is that what you call withdrawing, getting political hands off the issue?

When the Ontario Power Authority—the so-called power authority that they want to create—go about their business, they'll have to have their business plan approved by the minister. When the so-called conservation office wants to do something, they'll have to have their plan approved by the minister. There's going to be as much political interference with this as we saw with the previous Conservative government.

In fact, we saw the appointment of the new directors to the board of Ontario Power Generation last week. One would think that when you're dealing with, again, an essential service that is so important to Ontario's economy, so important to Ontario's environment and so important to the individual well-being of Ontarians, that there'd be some public discussion, some public vetting of who is going to be the director of Ontario Power Generation—none. The worst excesses of the Conservative government were repeated by the McGuinty government.

Who did they go out and appoint? Well, they didn't learn anything from the Conservatives' experience with so-called American nuclear experts. Two of the people they're appointing are Americans who claim to have some experience in the nuclear industry. My God, if you want to look at the fiasco of Pickering, look at how all the American consultants made off with tens of millions of dollars and left behind a disaster. But what are the McGuinty Liberals doing? They're going to go and appoint two so-called nuclear experts from the United States.

Who are the other directors being appointed? Did we see anyone who might be a recognizable consumer representative? No. Did we see anyone, say, from the pulp and paper industry or the mining industry or the steel industry who might be able to say at the table, "Look, this is going to have this kind of effect on these industries"? No. Who did we see appointed? If you go down the list, it's overwhelmingly people who have a vested interest in the privatization of our electricity system. The very same kind of characters the Conservative government appointed to the board of Ontario Power Generation and the Liberals used to criticize, the Liberals are now busy appointing. My God, I look at who Mike Harris used to appoint and I look at who Dalton McGuinty is appointing and I think the only difference is that the fellows who are there now make their \$5,000 and \$6,000 political contributions to the Liberals, while the people who were there before made their \$5,000- and \$6,000-a-year political contributions to the Conservatives. That's the only thing that's changed.

I just want to talk about that for a minute. I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to stand just about here, just about in this place, and he used to rail against the

Conservatives going out there and holding fundraiser after fundraiser with companies and corporations that wanted to have government business. I can remember Dalton McGuinty railing against the Conservatives accepting huge corporate donations from companies that clearly had a vested interest in the privatization of Ontario's electricity system. I thought, my God, Mr McGuinty must really be opposed to this. But what do I read this summer and this fall in the papers and what do I see on the television screen? Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, and Dwight Duncan holding these massive fundraisers—massive fundraisers—where, guess who's invited? Guess who's invited to come and put their \$5,000 or \$6,000, whatever the legal limit allows, in fact, beyond the legal limit in some cases, because it's not just the head corporation, but the subsidiary of the subsidiary of the subsidiary and the subsidiary of the subsidiary of the subsidiary? They all come and put down the money. And who are these companies? They're companies that clearly hope to profit from the backdoor privatization of Ontario's electricity system.

I think to myself, how disappointed people must be across Ontario, how disappointed that Mr McGuinty would stand over here and criticize the Conservatives and refer to them as being for sale, being available to be bought, being open to the highest bidder and condemning all of that, and now he's doing the exact same things with the exact same corporations. When the Premier and the minister were challenged, do you know what their response was? Their response was, "Well, that's the way it's done." When the Conservatives are government, they can be bought. Now when Mr McGuinty is the government, the same companies can come and make their financial contributions to the Liberal Party. Who knows? They may be major beneficiaries of hydro privatization. They may be the next Eleanor Clitheroes—\$2 million in salary, \$1 million a year in pension, \$6-million severance allowance, \$330,000 in limousine expenses, \$174,000 in car expenses.

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Interjection: The yacht.

Mr Hampton: Oh, and the Liberal member over there says I forgot the yacht. How could I forget the yacht? The same people who were hoping to cash in on the privatization of this essential service under the Conservatives are now making their financial contributions to Mr McGuinty and his government, hoping to repeat the same cashing in.

You know, Speaker, a word that is somewhat similar to the Hippocratic oath comes to mind, but if I said that word, you'd say I was out of order. It's not the Hippocratic oath, but it's very close in terms of how the word sounds. That's the only way to describe this phenomenon that we see.

I just want to take the brief time to outline what I believe should be the real agenda.

The Acting Speaker: I'd request the member for Kenora-Rainy River to withdraw his statement. He

knows exactly what I'm talking about. You can't say indirectly what you can't say directly.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw my comments about the Hippocratic oath.

So I want to spend the last—

Mr Kormos: You didn't have any intention to imply hypocrisy?

Mr Hampton: No, I didn't have any intention of implying hypocrisy.

Mr Kormos: On the part of the Liberal government.

Mr Hampton: On the part of the Liberal government. But I withdraw it.

Anyway, I want to spend the last nine and a half minutes setting out what I think that we should be doing. We need only look to our west and our east. Hydro Québec is not going to privatize, and you know what? Both the Liberals and Conservatives refer to the debt associated with Ontario's electricity system and say, "Oh, we've got this debt. Therefore, we have to privatize it."

Do you know what? If you take the population of Ontario and the population of Quebec, Hydro-Québec has a significantly higher per capita debt than does Ontario's electricity system. I don't hear anybody saying that Hydro-Québec is broke. I don't hear anybody saying it's bankrupt, that the people of Quebec should sell it off to the Enrons and the Brascans of the world.

Quebec has a clear strategy. They recognize that their hydroelectricity system is a fundamental economic advantage for that province. They recognize that whether it's the steel industry, the aluminum industry, the aircraft assembly industry, the pulp and paper industry, the plastics industry or the chemical industry, keeping their electricity system in public hands and ensuring that they have some control over it is a fundamental economic advantage for the province.

If you look at the size of debt that Manitoba Hydro carries and then you look at the population of Manitoba, Manitoba's hydroelectricity system has a far higher per capita debt than does Ontario's electricity system. You know, if the Conservatives or the Liberals dared to stand up in the Manitoba Legislature—I'm not sure there are any Liberals in the Manitoba Legislature.

Interjection: Two.

Mr Hampton: Oh, two. I'm sorry. Yes, and they're guaranteed to have at least two differing opinions on any issue. But if Conservatives or Liberals dared to stand up and suggest that Manitoba Hydro be privatized because it was carrying too high a debt load, I could assure you that whoever that political spokesperson was, they wouldn't be around after the next election.

British Columbia, sort of the protege government for Dalton McGuinty: The Gordon Campbell government of British Columbia was elected, and they said they were going to privatize BC Hydro. Well, let me tell you, they beat a retreat from that position that was faster than the sun going down over the Rocky Mountains, because industry in British Columbia said, "You're crazy. You're nuts. You're giving away one of our fundamental economic advantages vis-à-vis our trading partners in the

US Midwest and the US Pacific coast." That is exactly what's going on here in Ontario.

But there's an even more dangerous aspect to this. As it stands now, as long as your electricity system is run as a publicly owned, not-for-profit system, you are exempt from the NAFTA provisions. But when you privatize and deregulate your system, and you start moving down that road of privatization, what does NAFTA say? NAFTA says that you then turn electricity into a tradable commodity and you are then caught by the NAFTA provisions. And what do the NAFTA provisions say? The NAFTA provisions say that, for example, once you start trading electricity back and forth in a private market with the United States, you can't withdraw from that market. It also says that once you do that, even though the electricity may be produced within the boundaries of Ontario, Ontario doesn't own it any more. If someone in Chicago is prepared to pay more for electricity that is produced at Niagara Falls, Pickering or on the Mattagami River, then that's where the electricity goes. It goes to whoever is prepared to pay the most.

I encourage people at home—you can probably get this information from the Web, off the Internet—to look at what electricity prices are in New York City, Chicago and Detroit. On an average basis, they are significantly higher than they have been here in Ontario. And so the question you have to ask yourself is—and the Liberals want to ignore this question and avoid it all together—why do we want to put ourselves in a position where we'd have to bid against consumers in New York just to keep our own electricity? What is the logic in that? Why would we want to put ourselves in a position where we'd have to bid against electricity consumers in Chicago, where the average price is significantly higher, just to keep our own electricity? Why would we want to give up control over what we all agree is an essential service? We all need it. We need it every day. Why? What on earth would possess us to give up control over what has been one of the fundamental economic advantages for Ontario's industries? What would ever possess us to give up control over something which has such a huge environmental impact on the province? Liberals don't want to answer that question. As usual, they want to pretend that it's not a question. They just hope that it never, ever makes it onto the public radar screen. It is making onto public radar screen.

Just last week, a list of people who probably know more about electricity supply, sustainability, options and prices than anybody in the Liberal caucus will ever know, ran an add in the Toronto Globe and Mail. These are some of the things they pointed out. I think it dares repeating, because it is so important for Ontario's economy. They ran the ad in the Toronto Globe and Mail, and it was an open letter to Dalton McGuinty. They said that Mr McGuinty, before the election, during the election, promised that electricity would remain public in Ontario. When asked a specific question on Focus Ontario in November, 2002, about where new generation would come from, you said it will come from Ontario public

generation, it will be publicly owned, not-for-profit, just as it's been in the past. They said that's what you promised before and during the election.

Now, they said, Bill 100 follows "the same old failed and discredited electricity program" as the Conservatives. And they warn that your plan "will increase consumer electricity rates dramatically and force electricity-reliant industries to move production out of Ontario, taking good jobs with them." They said, "Don't Pull the Plug on Ontario's Future."

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That is what is at stake here, and that's the debate that Mr McGuinty and Mr Duncan and so many of the Liberals wish to avoid. But this debate can't be avoided. The economic future of the province demands it, the environmental future of the province demands it and the social and economic well-being of families in this province, especially modest- and low-income families, demands it.

For the few brief moments I have left, I just want people to clearly understand: You don't see Quebec, you don't see Saskatchewan, you don't see Manitoba and you don't see British Columbia in a hurry to privatize their electricity systems. They recognize it is a fundamental underpinning of the economy and of society, of fundamental importance for the environment, and they intend to keep public control, democratic control. They also recognize the cost advantages of public not-for-profit electricity and so they are going to maintain public not-for-profit electricity. New Democrats say that is what we should be doing here in Ontario, not Liberal privatization through the back door.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a great pleasure this evening to reply to Mr Hampton's remarks. There is no question that he has a basis of facts when he says that hydro is one of the linchpins of the Canadian economy. It is one of the key things that has driven our economic development and one of the key things that maintains the international sustainability of our industries in Ontario.

Of course, his answers and his solutions are somewhat simplistic when he says it has to be all in public hands. One of the great things about the nuclear base of power we have in Canada and in Ontario is that it's a home-grown technology—actually, Atomic Energy of Canada is located in Mississauga South—and throughout that industry, we employ over 26,000 people in Ontario and Canada. It is a technology unique to Canada, which is competitive worldwide, and it has its base in Ontario.

What we have found through the refurbishing of these nuclear plants is that the lifetimes can be extended and there are abilities for us to get gains in production and extend the lifetimes of them. Even with what they call the all-included costs of decommissioning these plants, we still have a competitive advantage that has been referred to in the neighbourhood of 50% compared to the bordering states in the United States.

With this great base of publicly owned power and our nuclear base, we have a unique international competitive advantage, and that will be able to sustain Ontario as we look not for just one solution, but for solutions in the private marketplace as well and look for these new technologies and a way of reducing the stressed airshed that we have so dramatically, which we are helping remedy with the closing of these coal plants.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr Speaker—
Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Excuse me?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): You remember the NDP, don't you?

Mr Chudleigh: Yes, I remember them. They were the reason I ran for politics, actually. They created an economic environment in this province that was driving me out of business, so I felt—

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Like Gilles Pouliot used to say, shoot over there.

Anyway, it was an interesting dissertation that the leader of the third party gave because he's got a lot of good facts and he's right in many aspects. The province does run on its electrical power, as it has since very early in our development in the last century. His phobia about having it publicly owned is neither here nor there. It's not something that's terribly important to me. What is important is that the government of the day get on with the job of creating more electricity, and certainly renewable energy can be part of that mix. But renewable energy, even if it proceeds as quickly as its most optimistic supporters suggest it should, will only make up the extra electricity that we will need from year to year. What we need are some massive electrical projects to produce power that will protect our power in Ontario for years and years to come, and that is either massive hydro-electric projects—the one in Manitoba, for instance, is one that will provide considerable energy, although there will be huge losses in the transmission from Manitoba. It could involve nuclear power. I think that's an alternative that has to be looked at. It could also involve the production of clean coal. If we close those coal-fired generators, we're going to be importing the extra power from the US, which is going to be coal-fired power anyway, and we're going to get about 50% of that pollution across our border.

So I think the government of the day should simply get on with the job.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I think it's rather interesting to listen to both Liberals and Tories on this particular issue of public versus private. Because they say, "Oh, Mr Hampton, you have an ideology when it comes to electricity," and that somehow or other, them advocating private power or mixed private power and privatization by the back door is not an ideology and it's sane. I'm just saying it's rather strange to listen to Tories and Liberals talk about Mr Hampton and the New Demo-

crats being ideologically driven when it comes to energy policy. What do you call what you guys are doing?

To the other point that I listened to, members are clearly saying, "Oh, we need to do this because we need to recognize that hydro"—and I agree with the member from Mississauga, Mr Peterson, who says it's part of what makes Ontario work and allows this province to operate and to prosper. I agree. The problem is, however, that when you compare hydro prices, public versus private, there's a huge difference.

Take a look at the province of Quebec. We have now, for example, in Timmins, Minmetals, the largest operator of steel companies in the world. It's based out of China. Yes, the communists are coming to Canada and they're going to buy Falconbridge up in Timmins and Sudbury. One of the things we're worried about is that there are some rumours going around that basically, if they were able to, they'd love to transfer production over to Quebec. Why? Energy costs are a heck of a lot cheaper. And guess what? It's a public system. You can produce electricity and sell electricity in a public system in Quebec for less than what we now have to pay since the Tories started mucking around with the public system we had some time ago.

I want to ask, was the old Ontario Hydro the best it could have been? Of course not. There were changes that needed to be done. Some of those were started by the former leader of the NDP and other changes needed to be done. But the point is, what's important is that we stay within a public system because, at the end of the day, it is an infrastructure issue that's important to the economy of Ontario.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to pass my comments on with regard to Bill 100. One of the comments made was that this will not be an opportunity for the small farmers. I must share with the House the opportunity that I had this summer of travelling throughout much of Ontario, working on renewable energy for the Minister of Agriculture. Part of the scope of the project that I looked at was identifying the opportunities and challenges for biomass, anaerobic digestion, wind, solar, ethanol and biodiesel.

I can tell you that first-hand I saw the opportunities that are available with the farming community, in either anaerobic digestion, solar or wind, that are there for our farming community. I can also add that our farming community—small, medium or large farms—certainly is willing and looks forward to the ability to move forward on renewable energy.

But I would also like to say too that, as many of you know, I'm from the riding of Huron-Bruce and we are the home of Bruce Power. This is a company that has done, in my mind, a terrific job of producing power that will support the base, and I see it as moving forward with the supply mix. The nuclears do supply our base need. This is a company that has always and will continue to be providing safe, clean energy, and has certainly been a wonderful asset to our riding.

I would like to add that Bill 100 will move forward the energy that is required to meet the needs of the people of Ontario through conservation and increasing the production that will meet the capacity requirements for the people of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker: The member for Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hampton: I want to thank all the members for their comments. Let me just say in reply, some said, "Oh, Hampton has an ideology." You know what? I do. Health care should remain in public hands. It should be not-for-profit, because it is an essential service and because anywhere they've messed around with privatization of health care, it ends up costing a lot more, and a whole lot of people don't get access.

Similarly with electricity. One of the things that Professor Thomas points out in his examination of the Liberal scheme is that they're going down a road which has not had much success. It hasn't been successful in New Zealand. It was a disaster in Brazil. It hasn't worked very well in Great Britain. It's creating problems on the European continent and in other jurisdictions that have flirted with privatization. It didn't work well in Montana and isn't working well in Alberta. Alberta has all the natural advantages: natural gas, coal, oil and fast-flowing rivers out of the Rocky Mountains. Yet, as a result of privatization and deregulation, Alberta has the highest electricity prices in North America.

Yes, I have an ideology. If we're interested in doing the best for Ontario's industry, keep electricity in public hands and ensure it operates on a not-for-profit basis. If we're interested in doing the best for our people, who want to turn on the lights and want to live in a sustainable future in terms of our homes and our apartments in our communities, keep electricity in public hands and provide it on a not-for-profit basis. If we want to do the best to look after the environment and ensure that we're moving to clean alternatives, that we're moving toward an effective strategy of electricity efficiency and conservation, keep electricity in public hands. That's the best way to do it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr McMeekin: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing.

This is a big issue. It's a huge issue. It's one where we need to learn from our past as we plan for our future. That's what the public hearings on Bill 100 were all about.

I'm pleased to say at the outset that the minister gets it. As importantly, the government gets it. We're moving forward in a responsible way after more than a decade of cumulative mismanagement in the electricity sector. We know we've got a lot of work to do to reassert around the issues of adequacy, reliability and safety, but I suppose it's a bit like eating an elephant: If you're going to eat an elephant, you've got to eat it one bite at a time.

This legislation is foundational to the work that the government wants to do. It's interesting that the process

we follow—I was engaged as a member of the social policy committee, with the capable leadership of the chairman, who is from the riding of Peterborough, and we heard some 146 different briefs. You were on that committee as well, Mr Speaker. By and large, I was really pleased, and I'm pleased to report here this evening that not only does the minister and the government understand the challenges we're facing, but the people who came out and made representation to us did as well.

In fact, I was rating their presentations as they made them. I had "N" for non-intervention, "I" for intervention, because I happen to believe that you're either one way or the other in terms of political philosophy. Some 85% of those, by my count, my calculation, reflected on Bill 100 and stated that they basically felt positive, to a large extent, about the direction we're going in. So it makes a difference when you get out on the road, when you ask the people who have to wear a situation rather than the people who've made the shoe what they think.

There's been a lot of talk about privatization. I want, for the record, to indicate very clearly that it's not the government's proposal to sell any assets. In fact, we define all the existing assets as heritage assets and they will be maintained in the public trust.

I also want to say it's passing strange that the member of the third party would reference needing only to look to the east and to the west. If his party, when they were in power, had not cancelled the contract we had negotiated with the government of Manitoba, we wouldn't be in half the mess we're in now. The previous government had tried to diversify the supply by becoming less reliant on the international grid and more reliant—it's like a portfolio; you want to diversify your assets—on publicly supplied power from our sister provinces of Manitoba and Quebec. He's walked out, I notice. I guess it was getting a little hot for him. The simple truth of the matter was that they wanted—

The Acting Speaker: The member knows full well not to make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr McMeekin: Yes, you're right. I apologize. I should not have referenced that.

The other issue I want to briefly mention is the whole issue of conservation and supply and the 4.3-cent cap. As history will record, it did nothing for conservation and next to nothing on the supply side.

The reference to Mr Thomas is interesting. I was there when Mr Thomas made his presentation and I asked him some questions. I said, "Who did you speak to?"

"I only spoke to the professional engineers." They were the only folks he spoke to.

I said, "Do you realize that Ontario Hydro has got a \$38-billion stranded debt?"

"No, I didn't realize that."

I said, "Well, did you realize that I'm an MPP for a government that said we were going to try to control premiums and tax increases, and we had to move on the health premium and all hell broke loose?"

He said, "No, I didn't know that."

So I said to him, "Do you know that there's nobody lining up outside my constituency office saying, 'Please, Ted, please, Mr MPP, go out and borrow \$10 billion more and just add it on to my provincial tax bill'?" I don't have constituents coming out and saying that to me, and with good cause.

We saw what happened when \$1.6 billion was raised for Ontario's number one priority, the health care sector. So we'll get through this.

Mr Bisson: You raised my taxes.

Mr McMeekin: You would raise everybody's taxes non-stop. You know why there are only eight of you back there? It's because the people of Ontario know all too well your record of economic mismanagement. We'll get through this. We'll get through it by being open, listening to the people of Ontario, learning from them and moving in the direction they've asked us to move in, and that's this responsible hybrid model that will focus on creating a culture of conservation and an adequate supply so that all the people of Ontario—residential consumers and businesses consumers—can benefit from a strong electricity sector.

The Acting Speaker: Continuing the debate, the member for Nipissing.

Ms Smith: I rise today in support of Bill 100 and reiterate at this point in the debate what the Ontario Electricity Restructuring Act is really all about.

This act will address the critical need for new supply, and increased conservation and will ensure price stability for consumers across the province. If this legislation is passed, it will reorganize the institutional structure to ensure efficient and effective management of our electricity sector. It will ensure sufficient electricity supply. It will encourage electricity conservation and renewable energy, and will facilitate electricity demand management.

This legislation will establish the Ontario Power Authority, an authority that will assess the adequacy and reliability of our electricity resources, something that doesn't happen presently in our province, and how shocking that is to realize. It will also forecast future demand, another function that I think is terribly important for the future supply of electricity in our province. We are also establishing a conservation bureau, and that's something I'd like to speak about for a couple of minutes because it's very important to me and to the voters of Nipissing.

When I was going door-to-door last fall, I spoke to a number of voters who were very concerned about the stranded debt of Ontario Hydro, the mess that we found ourselves in in the electricity field and the need for some reform, reform that the previous government just didn't have the stomach to deal with. So we have taken that on.

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We think it's important, as part of the whole reform of the electricity system, to look at conservation. The member for Etobicoke Centre is working very hard on conservation issues in the electricity field. She hosted this

past Saturday an electricity forum in her riding where 200 to 250 of her residents participated in a session where they were provided with information about different alternatives and different ways of conserving energy in their homes. This is a really important initiative, and I am going to undertake a similar initiative hopefully in January in my riding so that the people of Nipissing can benefit from the knowledge that's out there about how to conserve energy in their homes and in their small businesses. Conservation is so important in ensuring that our supply is there in the future.

You also heard this evening from the member for Huron-Bruce, Carol Mitchell, who has looked into alternative sources. You heard as well from the leader of the third party, who talked about the fact that this bill does not encourage the development of new sources of energy. I would just note for this Legislature that the Canadian Wind Energy Association, in its presentation on Bill 100, stated:

"The Canadian Wind Energy Association supports the general outline of Bill 100 and where it's headed with the development of the Ontario Power Authority, minister's directives and the ability to have two separate suppliers of power: one green and another one being the standard supply. These are all critical things to the development of wind energy, and they have simply not been available to the government in the past."

The previous government simply did not look at alternate sources. They were much too interested in continuing the growth of our \$38-billion debt at Ontario Hydro.

I would also like to just highlight some of statements made by the Positive Power Co-Operative's Jennifer Heneberry, in her presentation to the social policy committee on Bill 100. She stated:

"We were very pleased to see a number of the changes being proposed as part of Bill 100. We feel some of the proposed amendments are going to make it much easier for us, as a community co-operative developing wind power projects, to participate in the electricity market; things like references to non-discriminatory access to the transmission and distribution system, the promotion of cleaner and renewable energy sources and addressing the need for goals around renewable energy production. These are all things we were really happy to see in Bill 100."

A number of proponents in the renewable energy sector were very supportive of Bill 100. I would note that the leader of the third party also stated that we weren't listening. In fact, our government, through its Bill 100 hearings, heard 293 written and oral presentations. We have consulted widely on Bill 100. We have heard from 293 separate proponents on this subject. I think that our accountability with respect to this piece of legislation is incredible.

Bill 100 includes a strong public leadership role. We have clear accountability and a coordinated planning approach to address the growing gap between electricity supply and demand in order to keep the lights on now

and for our children. That is clearly important to each and every one of us in the Liberal caucus, in this government and, I think, to each and every Ontarian. I'm very proud to be supporting Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: Those are rapid-fire submissions on the part of Liberal backbenchers here in the dark of the night, 9:15 in the evening, the press gallery absent, folks at home lured by prime time television and the ease of the remote control to change channels. I'm just incredibly amazed at the lack of enthusiasm that these Liberal backbenchers have for this legislation. One would think that enthusiastic supporters of this legislation would want to exhaust every minute of the mere 20 minutes allotted to them.

I listened to Tim Hudak, with whom I disagree, I've got to tell you, but who was concerned enough about the impact of this legislation that he utilized every minute of the debate time, the very limited debate time, available to him.

I listened to Howard Hampton, with whom I agree entirely, but who is committed enough to the future of this province, its industry, its economy and the welfare of Ontarians, ordinary Ontarians—not the rich folk who contribute \$5,000 a pop at Liberal fundraisers so they can get intimate access so they can have pillow talk with the Minister of Energy and the Premier about the privatization of energy, but real Ontarians.

Howard Hampton made sure he utilized, exhausted every minute of the 60 minutes that was available to him for his leadoff. So I am amazed that Liberal backbenchers find themselves in rapid fire. They consider a two-minute question and comment utilization to be their contribution to the debate. That's remarkable, rather lacklustre. I'd say the gas tank is at empty when it comes to the Liberal caucus.

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Niagara Centre, who makes an excellent point, that now twice consecutively, members opposite didn't take the time. I appreciate some entered into debate at least, but the full time allowed was left on the clock, which I wonder shows the degree—you know what? It might be degree of commitment, but it's got to be awfully hard for the Liberal members to keep track of what's a promise and what's no longer a promise, what is on the books and what has been broken. It's got to be the confusion about what you still want to keep and what's been tossed out the window. They don't want to trip up by making a promise that's already been broken. That's probably why the remarks tonight are so short.

Two weeks ago, we had the Minister of Health strutting out of cabinet talking about how he was going to ban sushi in the province of Ontario.

Mr Kormos: Sushi?

Mr Hudak: Sushi was the top priority, followed by the Minister of Education beating his chest, saying that he was going to hunt down every Gummy Bear stalking the hallways of Ontario's schools as a top priority, and

the Attorney General, who thinks the top crime issue in the province of Ontario is banning certain breeds of dogs.

These do not reflect the priorities that I'm hearing from the people in health care. From constituents in Niagara, it's not the priority. We should be hearing about quality in the classrooms. It's certainly not the top crime issue that I'm hearing about from working families in the Niagara Peninsula, in Dunnville.

You see, the problem is they had a plan, but once Dalton McGuinty got keys to the Premier's limo, he tossed that plan out the window. When a government has no plan, when they toss out their plan, they end up in places that you didn't expect them to be or you don't want them to be.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm sorry. I do find it interesting that someone who was complaining that we have nothing to say just spoke for two minutes on nothing to do with the electricity bill. But go figure.

What I'd like to say is that there is no question that this is not going to appeal to the opposition, because it is a different policy direction, and it's about time. For a long time in this province, we haven't had a strategic plan dealing with the supply. Yes, I can see you're upset, because you had a perfectly good opportunity with the renewable task force, but you did nothing about it. So I understand why you are distressed when we are planning to do something about it and move forward.

I know that it's uncomfortable to hear, but even the Canadian Auto Workers say that this is an important improvement for the province in the supply of electricity. It is significant and important that new electricity legislation poses to reintroduce planning into the system. It's also important that the act gives a legislative mandate to promote conservation in the expansion of renewable energy.

We heard this time and time again and, I think, again to reiterate, the interest is there. When we put out a request for interest for 2,500 megawatts, what did we get? We got 60,000 megawatts of interest, because people are now saying it's time to reinvest in Ontario. It's stable, it has a plan, it has a policy, it's moving forward, it's consistent, and that hasn't been around for a long period of time. So I really do appreciate and understand why you're distressed. I might be too if I were in the same position, but the fact of the matter is we do have a plan and we are moving forward. That's the important part to leave for the people of Ontario. We are going to have to pay for the price of electricity we use, but we're going to do it in a fashion and manner that's strategic.

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Hon Mr Bradley: I noticed that in their speeches someone mentioned somewhere along the way the speech of the leader of the New Democratic Party, who if you listen to him will sometimes sound as though he knows what he's talking about. But some of us who have read all the books on the New Democratic Party understand, as our last speakers did, that in fact there's a little bit of history there. There were these non-utility generating

projects, all of which were private, in Ontario. They came into effect—I wouldn't blame my friend from Niagara Centre. By that time he had had a conflict with one of the previous Premiers and was not part of the cabinet, so he was probably against these.

These non-utility generating projects were all private. This was under a New Democratic Party government. I find that hard to believe, especially when I hear the speech of the leader.

When the New Democratic Party was in power, I thought perhaps—I knew they wouldn't nationalize Inco. Even though my good friend Floyd Laughren said at one time that they should nationalize Inco, I didn't think that would really happen. He was a very pragmatic individual and a good friend of mine, so I understood that. But I didn't see the government of Bob Rae, the New Democratic Party, nationalizing power production in Ontario, because there was some private power. Not only was he allowing new, non-utility generating stations, but he was also in fact not closing down that private power which exists on the grid at the present time.

I well recall his opposition to the nuclear generating stations. I can't think of any nuclear generating station that was shut down under the NDP, but I do remember that after five years of NDP government there was a \$50-billion debt that had accumulated in addition to the debt already in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: One of the Liberal speakers has two minutes to reply.

Mr McMeekin: I want to make it clear that if our clear, articulate, level-headed, comprehensive plan for the energy sector sounded like we were lacking in any enthusiasm, then I want the people of Ontario to understand that we're very enthusiastic about finally being a responsible government, moving forward in partnership with the people of Ontario. We understand that government isn't just about being lean and mean; it's about being responsibly keen and green.

Having spent five or six days with the members of the social policy committee listening to all the representations, it was those who came with a particular interest and bias toward alternative energy who seemed to be the most enthusiastic about some of the opportunities our government was providing, an opportunity to build on the twin strengths of a developing culture of conservation and a real commitment to enhanced energy supply.

As we rethink these issues and move forward, it would be helpful for us to acknowledge that the very best consumer protection we can put in place in Ontario is an aggressive combination of conservation and new supply. It's our intent to do that and to use everything positive in Ontario, from time to time filling up our tank with the creative entrepreneurial ideas of the people of Ontario, who after all are our greatest strength, making sure that we reinvest in this valuable sector, because we believe we have finally got it right.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 100. I want to begin by

congratulating my colleague the member from Durham, who is our critic for energy and participated in the hearings on this particular issue. I think he has done an outstanding job in listening to the opinions that had been voiced at the committee and in representing our caucus.

But I guess what we have before us now is a proposal by this government to completely reorganize the supply of electricity in the province of Ontario, obviously recognizing that there is a need to do so, and our government recognized this. Some of the actions that were undertaken by our government are reflected and were undertaken originally by our energy ministers Mr Wilson and Mr Baird. This proposal moves forward, and the government has certainly established some very laudable goals. I know that they're anxious to ensure that conservation initiatives are adopted. They are looking to adopt new and renewable sources of energy, and these are all laudable goals.

However, I guess the question that we need to ask ourselves is, does the government have a plan, and are they going to be able to do so at the end of the day? One of the concerns that the public has, and certainly industry and business have, is the increasing cost of electricity, a cost that has been increasing on an ongoing basis this past year. Certainly there are people throughout the province who are very concerned that this winter, as the price continues to escalate, it's going to mean that it's going to become more and more difficult to set aside money to pay for food and other living expenses.

I know I hear from seniors on fixed incomes. I hear from students. I hear from small business people. We hear from industry, and we hear from homeowners and from tenants. People are very concerned about the increasing costs of electricity, and that's something that we're going to have to monitor extremely carefully, because I know myself, as a former Minister of Labour, that we have to make sure that the environment in Ontario continues to remain competitive. If we continue to see these escalating energy costs, certainly it is going to put a

damper on those who are looking to expand businesses in the province.

This increase in the cost of electricity is also going to have an impact on our hospitals, which are already facing a shortfall. It's going to have an impact on our colleges and our universities, again, which are hard-pressed for dollars. It's going to have an impact on our schools, which are indicating there is a need for additional dollars to meet the needs of their students.

So certainly one of the areas where the government is going to have to ensure that things go as planned is to make sure that the price of electricity does not rise to a point where it's going to continue to have a negative impact not only on individuals in the province, but also on businesses. It's going to make it harder and harder to be competitive in the global environment. I think that's important.

I think the government's plan to close the coal plants, although laudable, is a goal that they're simply not going to be able to achieve. It was something that I had looked at when I was the Minister of the Environment and certainly wanted to do, but, again, it will be totally impossible to bring into this province that amount of generating capacity, the 25%. I think that we're going to see another broken promise on the part of this government, because at this point in time, the only coal plant that looks like it's going to be closing on time, as planned, will be Lakeview, which I actually announced for closure when I was the Minister of the Environment. Right now, there is no schedule to close any of those other plants, and I think this government is going to be very hard-pressed. In fact, I think it's going to be totally impossible to replace that capacity.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for her comments. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 in the afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement		
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 20 October 2004

Mercredi 20 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Each year, we are reminded to thank farmers. In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, farming makes a significant contribution to the local economy, employing about 1,250 people, with farm receipts in excess of \$43.6 million.

Last week, I attended the annual general meeting of the East Nipissing/Parry Sound/Muskoka Federation of Agriculture. Their message to me was pretty bleak. The BSE situation continues to be desperate despite the recent funding announcement by the McGuinty government. According to farmers in my region, this new funding will only help large operations, not the family farm.

Farmers are having a tough time getting the ear of the McGuinty government. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture went so far as to hire a well-known lobbyist to ask what the association should be doing to get this government's attention. The consultant advised that this government is being run centrally by the Premier's office and that the Premier has a huge staff filled with the wrong people.

The evidence speaks for itself. The 2004 budget saw a 20% cut in funding for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Then the government announced that it was suspending the municipal outlet drainage program. Farmers are also concerned with how their farms are affected by the Greenbelt Task Force report.

Today, on our first opposition day, we are highlighting the government's failure to support farmers in Ontario. It's about time this government fulfilled its responsibility to make the Ministry of Agriculture and Food a lead ministry and showed some leadership by providing the support for farmers that it promised before it was elected.

CHILDREN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today to acknowledge the establishment of two new chapters of the Children's Breakfast Club in my riding of Mississauga East.

The Mississauga breakfast clubs opened their doors exactly two weeks ago today, with one location at Bloor

and Dixie and the other at Glenhaven public school. After only two weeks, the locations are already serving breakfast to over 80 children in the area. These numbers are expected to continue to grow, doubling or even tripling over the coming year.

The Children's Breakfast Club is a non-profit organization founded on the belief that every child has a right to a nutritious breakfast. In addition to receiving a nutritious meal, children who are part of the program are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of educational activities, including field trips, participating in sports tournaments, and joint outings with other breakfast clubs or programs.

Programs such as the Children's Breakfast Club are assisting our government in its efforts to promote a healthy diet. The breakfast program educates both children and their parents about the importance of a nutritious breakfast, and assists those needy families who could not otherwise provide this essential meal for their children.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank staff and volunteers at the Mississauga breakfast clubs on behalf of my constituents in Mississauga East. Their generosity, hard work and tireless efforts are making all the difference in the lives of children in need in my riding.

GREENBELT LEGISLATION

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): The Liberal government claims to care for the protection of green spaces, but it has shown through its actions that it has no clue how farmland is to fit into its greenbelt or Toronto growth plans. In fact, when it first defined its greenbelt study area, it divided the Holland Marsh in half: half in, half out.

Farmers in my riding tell me they are confused about what the government is trying to do. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture said that farmers are "perplexed with the greenbelt proposal and its long-term impacts," and that the proposal "gives no indication of how it will protect agricultural land other than utilizing a land freeze."

Farmers in the frozen area are already feeling the effects of the greenbelt bill. The OFA has heard from farmers who are having trouble borrowing money from lenders due to the fuzziness of the government's proposals. Lenders are telling farmers that their land is worth less.

Nothing in the government's greenbelt proposals does anything to encourage farmers in my riding to continue

farming. Local plans to promote farming have been ignored by this government. Federations of agriculture and municipalities in the GTA worked together in 2003 to produce a GTA agricultural action plan. This locally driven plan would promote farming in the GTA, help preserve urban-rural boundaries and allow decisions to be made at a local level.

It's time for this government to start listening.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to focus again on the crisis facing alternate level of care patients in our community.

Recently the Ministry of Health agreed to a request from the Sudbury Regional Hospital to discharge and place patients in long-term-care facilities outside our region. This is because there are no long-term-care beds available in our community. As a result, patients could be placed far from home, in Espanola, on Manitoulin Island and even in Chapleau.

This is very distressing to family members, who have advised my office that they already go to the hospital daily to provide additional care to their loved ones. Clearly, they won't be able to do that if their loved ones are so far away. They are concerned about the mental, physical and emotional well-being of their family members as a result.

When Timmins faced a similar crisis this summer, the Minister of Health funded temporary beds at the Timmins hospital and in long-term-care facilities in the community. The latter option makes good sense in Sudbury because a redevelopment project at our home for the aged means that some 30 temporary beds could be created at Pioneer Manor for the next six months. What is required is funding from the ministry to support the beds.

In the longer term, the minister must also allocate new, permanent long-term-care beds in Sudbury. Again, Pioneer Manor might be considered in this regard. With the redevelopment, there remain existing C and B beds which could be converted to A beds at a cost that would be far less than building new A beds from scratch.

The minister has said he hopes to have a solution to the immediate crisis by the end of the week. This must occur. Patients and their families need to know they won't be placed in long-term-care facilities far from home, and work must be done on a long-term solution to ensure we don't have a crisis like this again.

1340

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Mr Speaker, 2004 marks the 15th anniversary of the historic discovery of the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis, the first human genetic disorder identified in the human genome. CF, regrettably, is still the leading genetic cause of death in Canadian children. Canadians have been at the forefront of the fight to find a cure or control for cystic fibrosis for the last 40 years.

Leading this fight is the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. It is the world's second-largest non-governmental granting agency in the field of CF research.

Today I would like to recognize the work of three Ontario researchers: Doctors Lap-Chee Tsui, Jack Riordan and Francis Collins. With the support of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, these researchers are credited with the discovery of the gene responsible for CF. Continuing with this progress, last May, Dr Richard Boucher, from the University of North Carolina, reported the successful creation of a mouse with lung pathology similar to human cystic fibrosis. With these developments in research and treatment, young Canadians with CF are living longer, healthier lives.

Finally, I would like to invite all members to join me, my colleagues from Beaches-East York and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the discovery of the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis tonight in the dining room. Joining us will be young Adele and Celia Orr from my riding, sisters afflicted with cystic fibrosis. I look forward to seeing all members in attendance to support this worthy cause.

CHICKEN FARMERS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I say to you, Mr Speaker, to my colleagues and to those in the gallery that today is Chicken Day at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'm pleased to welcome chicken farmers here to Queen's Park from across the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: I'm going to run out of time.

I don't want to ruffle my colleagues' feathers, but I believe that, if not the number one feather riding in the province, we definitely have the best tasting chicken in the riding of Erie-Lincoln. I recommend that you try it. I've had the opportunity to tour a hatchery, Fleming Chicks—

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: —I can't believe I'm being heckled on this, Mr Speaker—and to visit with Gus Panagopolis, who has a layer and grower operation in Fulton in my riding, all the way to Port Colborne Poultry, a major manufacturer and employer in Port Colborne.

I'm very pleased that about 150 chicken farmers are in my riding of Erie-Lincoln: in Niagara and the Dunnville area. I'm very proud of their investment, very proud of their confidence in the local economy and very proud of the outstanding product. From supply management in the province of Ontario, my friends, our chicken farmers.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I just want to remind the House that we have good chicken in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound too.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's a good point of privilege.

Members' statements.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): We have our own chicken farmer here, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr Speaker, I can't tell you how proud I am to be part of a government that's fighting to ensure our seniors are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. For eight long years, the Conservative government bullied the poor and vulnerable and abandoned seniors in this province. The Conservatives cut back standards in long-term-care facilities. They eliminated the requirement of even one bath per week. They eliminated standards, they stopped inspections and on the Canada Day long weekend they surreptitiously hiked the fees for Ontario seniors by 15%.

Our government is turning that around. We finally have a Minister of Health who understands that seniors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. That's why we are making sure that long-term-care facilities are inspected and standards are enforced. That's why we are making sure that our seniors and our vulnerable get at least two baths per week. That's why we're making sure that 600 new nurses and 1,400 additional front-line staff are hired so that a registered nurse can be on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I know that seniors in my community are thrilled to finally have a Minister of Health and a government that are standing up to support them when they need us, and I'm proud to be part of that government.

HOME CARE

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This year we are making sure that 21,000 more deserving Ontarians have access to home care in Ontario, Ontarians who otherwise would have been forced to stay in expensive hospital beds for weeks and months away from their loved ones, away from their community. These are seniors who might otherwise have lost their homes and had to move into long-term-care beds at a much higher price.

These are Ontarians the Conservative Party left behind. That's right, they made a shambles of home care. Do you want to talk about bullying? When local volunteer boards of community care access centres stood up for our seniors, for our frail, for our vulnerable, do you know what the former Conservative government did? They fired those community volunteers who spoke up on behalf of sick seniors. Every single one of those volunteers was fired by the former government. They replaced the citizen boards with government puppets who ripped apart home care in Ontario. That's the shameful legacy of the Tories on home care.

We're putting the care and money back into home care. We are investing over \$73 million to reach more than 21,000 Ontarians to make sure they can get the care they need in their homes. We're making sure health care is delivered in neighbourhoods where our seniors want to

stay: in their communities. It's the right thing to do for Ontarians, and it's the right thing to do for our seniors.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): When it comes to health care in Ontario, the McGuinty government is delivering real results. We've heard about long-term care. The Tories cut standards; we're bringing them back. We've heard about home care. The Tories cut funding and took home care away from Ontarians. We're making new investments to help 21,000 more Ontarians get home care this year.

Let's look at nurses. The Tories likened them to the Hula Hoop and said they were out of style. Well, I've got news for you: Nurses never go out of style. That's why we're investing in 2,400 new full-time nurses this year alone.

Let's look at doctors. The NDP cut off the supply. The Tories talked the talk but didn't walk the walk. We're actually getting the job done, changing the way doctors do business so that underserved communities have access again, so that northerners have access again, so that seniors have access again.

Let's look at hospitals. The NDP cut 8,000 beds. The Tories closed hospitals and ERs. We've invested almost \$1 billion since taking office to help hospitals. We're working with them to balance their budgets.

After 13 years of fewer nurses, fewer doctors, longer wait times, less home care and lower standards for our seniors, we finally have a Premier in Dalton McGuinty and a Minister of Health in George Smitherman who are turning this ship around. That means more doctors, more full-time nurses, reduced wait times, more home care, more community care and higher standards of care for our seniors.

That's real change. That's what we're fighting for, and that's what we're delivering.

VISITORS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure all members of the Legislature would want to help me in welcoming students from the Mississippi School in Carleton Place, Ontario. There are four students sitting in our west lobby here: Courtney Coady, Breanna Holzschcher, Lucy Bidgood-Lund and Patricia Roberge. They are here with their teacher, Kelly Hough, and a parent, Aleta Roberge.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): What can I say to the dean of the Legislature? That wasn't a point of order, but welcome.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a similar point of order, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Who has the point of order?

Mr Wilson: I'm trying to enlighten you.

I want to welcome Amanda Phillp and Leslie Morrison, who are with us here today.

The Speaker: There was no enlightenment, but it's OK.

Today we have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Poland, led by His Excellency Longin Pastusiak, Speaker of the Senate. He is accompanied by his wife and other Senators. Please join me in warmly welcoming them to the Parliament.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 20, 2004, from the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KIDS FIRST LICENCES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES PLAQUES D'IMMATRICULATION EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS

Ms Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to support children's charities in Ontario / Projet de loi 130, Loi visant à aider les oeuvres de bienfaisance pour enfants en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Ontario's children's charities are an invaluable component to the socio-economic network of the province. This bill proposes an optional program allowing persons to make donations to support the work of registered children's charities in Ontario when paying fees for licences, permits and number plates issued under the Highway Traffic Act.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND WORKPLACE HARASSMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (VIOLENCE ET HARCÈLEMENT AU TRAVAIL)

Ms Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to acts of workplace violence and workplace harassment / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en matière d'actes de violence et de harcèlement au travail.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): This bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to impose duties on employers, supervisors and workers with respect to acts of workplace violence and workplace harassment which are defined to be acts of physical or psychological violence or coercion, psychological harassment or misuse of power. Among other duties, this bill will require employers to develop a written code of conduct with respect to workplace violence and workplace harassment that is reflective of a commitment to maintain a workplace free from violence and harassment as well as establish formalized policies and procedures, including a complaints procedure, a reporting procedure and an investigative procedure, and establish remedies and disciplinary measures to deal with workplace violence and workplace harassment.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BIODIVERSITY

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'm delighted to rise in the House today to inform the members of this government's intention to develop an Ontario biodiversity strategy.

On Monday night, I invited representatives of environmental, industry, aboriginal and other groups, as well as senior staff from other provincial agencies, to discuss our plans. I let them know that we wished to move forward on this important commitment, and sought their comments and advice. I proposed to them an open, transparent and inclusive process that involves all organizations working together to develop this strategy. I want them to be our partners in this project.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy defines biodiversity as "the variability among all living organisms, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems." In other words, whatever we can do to maintain a rich diversity of plant life, animals and entire ecosystems will make our province stronger and improve our quality of life. In fact, the strategy also points out that "biodiversity supports human societies ecologically, economically, culturally and spiritually."

Unfortunately, the importance of biodiversity is not often recognized. We see ecosystems being degraded and species, as well as genetic diversity, being reduced at an ever-increasing pace. There is broad recognition that we need to do something about this global environmental

problem. From our perspective here in Ontario, action is required at both the federal and provincial levels.

The members may be interested to know that Canada was the first industrialized country to ratify the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Subsequently, the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy was released by the federal government in 1996. Ontario is a signatory to that document. That agreement commits each province and territory to use the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy as a guide to our actions and invites all Canadians to join with us in conserving Canada's biodiversity and using our biological resources in a sustainable manner. It also calls upon each government to develop its own approach to implementing the Canadian strategy.

Part of the UN convention is the 2010 biodiversity target. The target commits jurisdictions to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss. That means Canada will be reporting on its progress in this area six years from now.

We view biodiversity conservation as a shared responsibility for all Ontarians. That is why we are beginning an open and inclusive process with other agencies, organizations and the public to come up with this strategy. On Monday night, I received tremendous support from the groups that were assembled for both the commitment to developing an Ontario strategy and for the open and inclusive process that we've proposed to use for its development.

An Ontario strategy will be a helpful guide when working on programs and policies related to biological resources. It will also be a useful framework for a range of current initiatives, including protecting green space, halting the spread of invasive species, protecting species at risk and reviewing our parks and protected areas legislation. At the same time, it will support similar efforts to conserve biodiversity by Ontario industries, stakeholders and the public. The strategy would also identify gaps in what we're doing now and highlight priorities for action over the next five years.

Other jurisdictions have moved or are moving ahead. Quebec has a strategy in place. Saskatchewan has recently released its plan. British Columbia, Alberta and other provinces are now working on theirs.

We owe it to all Ontarians, both present and future, to protect the rich variety of species and ecosystems that we've been blessed with in this province. We have a responsibility to conserve biodiversity and use our biological resources in a sustainable way.

Conserving biodiversity is a key way of ensuring a healthy environment, strong communities and a thriving economy. I encourage everyone to take part in the development of the Ontario biodiversity strategy. We will be making available through our ministry a Web site and, on that, a workbook that will help guide the discussions. We should be up and running on that site by the end of November.

I look forward to informing the House of our progress as this initiative proceeds.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

STRATÉGIE VISANT DES ÉCOLES PLUS SAINES

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I rise today to speak about the government's efforts to make schools healthier places for students to learn. Our goal is to develop the intellectual, physical and emotional potential of our children and young adults so that they become the best contributing citizens they possibly can be.

To this end, every student should enjoy regular physical activity, appreciate a healthy lifestyle and have access to a full range of extracurricular activities, something that some folks in the House could probably benefit from as well.

Schools should be healthy environments where children get the right instruction, can follow the right example, and benefit from the right experience. Unfortunately, under the previous government, things were allowed to slide to the point where schools relied on vending machines filled with junk food as a source of financial assistance for their elementary schools.

We have taken a different approach. We have begun to rebuild our publicly funded education system, investing \$1.1 billion since coming to office, including \$854 million this year.

Je crois qu'il nous incombe de donner à nos élèves les meilleures chances possibles de succès, ce que nous pouvons en grande partie faire en sensibilisant les élèves à une bonne nutrition et aux choix alimentaires sains. C'est pourquoi je suis heureux d'annoncer une nouvelle politique sur la malbouffe pour aider à créer des milieux d'apprentissage plus sains pour les élèves de l'Ontario.

1400

Current research on children and nutrition provided by the Dietitians of Canada presents a staggering picture: there has been an increase in the consumption, for example, of carbonated products from five ounces per child per day to 12 ounces, that the serving size has grown 300% since the 1950s, and milk is consumed 30% less in schools that also sell soft drinks. Some 27% of boys and 23% of girls in grades 6 and 8 consume candy and chocolate bars daily. In fact, by the time children reach the tween years of nine to 12, many have lifestyle habits that could put them, sadly, in the fast lane for developing cardiovascular disease as early as their 30s.

Not surprisingly, the research also indicates that well-nourished children are more likely to be better prepared to learn. Likewise, inadequate nutrition can have a detrimental effect on children's ability to learn, as well as their physical growth and development. This is what parents have told us they want us to be supporting.

To provide boards with clear direction on what food items would be considered acceptable under this new policy, we asked the Dietitians of Canada, who are the credible voice on the subject of nutrition, to develop guidelines based on their extensive work and research. Today, we are providing these guidelines to all school

boards. They include examples of healthy snack and beverage choices, including milk, vegetable juice and yogourt, and certain snack foods, including popcorn and so on, as long as they're low enough in fat and sodium.

Under our new junk food policy, boards need to ensure that all schools with students from kindergarten to grade 8 restrict the sale of food and beverage items in vending machines to healthy and nutritious choices. We firmly believe this is one small way that Ontario's publicly funded education system can and must deliver excellence to students. Our schools and the broader school community, including parents, can play a very influential role in heightening our young people's awareness of the importance of good nutrition. We are counting on their support to really make the difference and help young children learn early in their development the importance of making those choices for themselves about a healthy lifestyle.

Cette initiative représente un autre pas vers la mise en oeuvre de la stratégie globale visant des écoles saines. Nous avons déjà fait des progrès en ce sens en accordant des fonds aux conseils scolaires leur permettant de mettre les écoles à la disposition des groupes communautaires après les heures de classe pour que ceux-ci aident les élèves à demeurer actifs.

This past July, I joined my colleague Jim Bradley, Minister of Tourism and Recreation, to announce a community use of schools initiative. By ensuring that school space is affordable and accessible to communities that schools serve, the government is supporting healthy, active lifestyles, encouraging citizen engagement in community activities and fostering safe and vital communities. Our vision is to have every school in Ontario recognized as a centre of community activity. Already, boards have begun to sign on to the voluntary agreement, providing increased opportunities for students and other members of the community to stay active. Next steps in the healthy schools strategy will include increasing minimum daily physical activity to 20 minutes in our elementary schools by next fall. We're also looking at how we can bring about healthier food choices in our high schools and our cafeterias.

Some of our school boards—in fact, many of them—already set a tremendous example in terms of the healthy alternatives to junk food they have already placed in their vending machines. We applaud their efforts in a whole variety of areas to put the health and well-being of students first. Today, we are asking all boards and schools across Ontario to do what I know they really want to do and these guidelines will make possible for them to do which is the same thing: to provide a healthier outlook for all the students under their care.

BIODIVERSITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): In response to the Minister of Natural Resources, I have a question: Where is the strategy on biodiversity, and what is it?

You were asked by the Environmental Commissioner, in his report of last year, November 27, 2003, to come up with a coordinated strategy on biodiversity, coordinated not only through MNR, but through agriculture, municipal affairs and environment. You tell us today that you have the "intention to develop" a strategy. It's not developed yet. You've indicated today that you started on this Monday. Monday night, you invited representatives to discuss it.

I'll quote further from your statement: "Unfortunately, the importance of biodiversity is not often recognized." I'll say—especially with your government, Minister.

Why do you make this announcement today? You've made this announcement less than 24 hours before Ontario's Environmental Commissioner delivers his next assessment on how this government operates. We'll see how MNR does this time.

In last year's report, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller highlighted biodiversity as the key issue to be developed by MNR. I guess you got in just under the wire. You got in under 24 hours, Minister, given that you were given this direction on November 27.

Gordon Miller advocated for and instructed this Legislature to bring in a coordinated policy for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Environment and MNR.

He indicates that government often fails "to grasp a wider perspective." I agree. "This failure to see the bigger picture"—I would indicate that the bigger picture is still lacking.

In his report, he not only talks about coordination, he talks about invasive species. I hear no details on invasive species and ecological land acquisition, and no mention of the northern boreal initiative, seed stock and afforestation.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the Minister of Education, it's truly another red-letter day for the McGuinty government in Ontario. The self-proclaimed education Premier and his education minister are truly making a mark on our education system—and it's a question mark.

After one full year in office, this dynamic duo of McGuinty-Kennedy has stage-managed more photo ops and spun more tales than Barnum and Bailey could ever conceive.

While they're plying their trade, school boards, school councils, parents and students are left wondering what these masters of the spin are up to and what it's all leading to. What are their priorities for education? What is their plan? And when they're finished with their smoke-and-mirrors performance, what role will be left for school boards, school councils and parents in our province?

What leading-edge thinking has led to today's pronouncement that the Minister of Education is assuming the role of official parent for Ontario's children? What

equips this Minister of Education with the omniscient wisdom to be the nutritionist-at-large for the province of Ontario?

What message does he send to school boards, school councils and parents by reaching into every school throughout this province and micromanaging right into their vending machines? Parents are not to be trusted—that's this minister's message. School councils are a sham, principals have no role and boards of education are meaningless to this minister.

That announcement, interestingly enough, comes only days after another one of this minister's bright thoughts, and that is to install cameras in every one of our elementary schools. Now we know that the purpose of those cameras is to ensure that these children don't consume Girl Guide cookies or pop in those schools.

The parents of Ontario want this minister to get on with his job of ensuring quality education. We are debating in this Legislature a bill brought forward by this minister to dismantle the professional learning program for teachers in this province. Minister, spend your time on quality education, not on trying to be the parent to every student and child in this province. What do you know about parenting?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): In the meantime, I'd like to hear the response from the third party, from the member for Timmins-James Bay.

BIODIVERSITY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's interesting, we have the Minister of Natural Resources who walks in here today to announce that he is finally doing something, after 12 months of being at the helm of the ministry, on what was one of their key campaign promises in the last election, which was dealing with the whole issue of biodiversity.

I find it rather passing strange that 12 months after—you have to ask yourself, why 12 months? I think the reason is pretty simple. The public is starting to get the idea of this government when people such as hospital CEOs—

Interjections.

1410

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order, member from Eglinton-Lawrence. I'm very interested in what the member from Timmins-James Bay is saying. Order.

Mr Bisson: I'm also interested, Mr Speaker.

That minister has been at the helm for 12 months. He's had 12 months to act on what was one of their key campaign promises. Here we are, 12 months later. Better late than never—no argument. But you have to ask yourself the question: Why today? Why did they wait 12 months to all of a sudden announce a biodiversity strategy for the province of Ontario? Simply put, they're trying to divert the attention of the people of Ontario off the bad record of this government when it comes to a number of issues, such as we're going to hear later during

question period, about how this government tries to bully people who work at hospitals to shut up about their hospital deficits. I think that's rather shameful.

But, to the biodiversity. You have to ask yourself a couple of questions. The first one is: Is this going to be another one of these committees that the minister puts together and at the end of the day does nothing with? I ask myself that question because there is already a track record, we'll learn later, about how some of the ministers of the crown have already done so. But, number two, if there is some work to be done in this area, and it should be taken seriously, there are a number of issues that have to be dealt with. The litmus test is, what will the government be prepared to do by way of legislation; and are they prepared to put the money in the Ministry of Natural Resources that has to be put in place to make sure those strategies are taken seriously and followed up? Stay tuned: another time, another channel. We'll soon find out.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): This Minister of Education would prefer to talk about empty calories than about empty promises. Why don't we talk about the fact that the centre for policy initiatives says we are \$1.5 billion short of where we should be to correct the problems that the previous government has left us? When are we going to talk about the failed funding formula that the Conservatives left us, that the Liberals spoke about, that they don't talk about any more? Why don't we talk about the botched busing transportation initiative they introduced, where 31 boards across this province are going to lose anywhere from 1% to 60% starting next year? When are we going to talk about the fact that we've got a moratorium on school closures and that schools are closing today and next year? When are we going to talk about the fact that this government in July said, "We are giving you \$100 million for special education," and in the next breath takes \$100 million away from the boards? When are we going to talk about these important things? When is this government going to say, "We need a new funding formula that addresses the needs of all of our students"?

I wager to you, Speaker, that your government, colleagues of yours are never going to change that funding formula. We are never going to see a new formula other than tinkering around the system and hoping to get away and playing with these kinds of initiatives where we can divert people's attention from the real problems we face in education and talk about empty calories instead of empty promises.

Minister of Education, why don't you talk to your colleagues about increasing minimum wage adequately so that people can afford to eat nutritious foods? Minister of Ed, when are you going to talk to your colleagues about increasing social assistance adequately so that people can buy nutritious food? Minister of Ed, while you are at it, why don't you tell Mr Sorbara, the finance minister there,

to release a couple of dollars so people on ODSP can have the money they need to buy nutritious food? Why don't you take the time, lean over to your colleagues and chat with them and say, "We've got to do something about this so people can afford to eat nutritiously"?

Minister, I know you and the Premier are good at dealing with empty calories, but I know you're not very good at dealing with your empty promises. We'll deal with it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Let's take some time to prepare ourselves.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): My question is for the Premier. I think it's important today to get your views on the record with respect to a growing fear over the personal conduct of your Minister of Health and the culture of fear he and his officials are spawning in the men and women responsible for our hospitals. Minister Smitherman describes anonymous sources as cowards and, under that definition, you have at least two cowards in your own caucus. Liberal MPPs, in today's Toronto Star, are expressing concern about Mr Smitherman's approach. Premier, are you going to continue to ignore the climate of fear this minister has created, ignore the concerns of your own backbenchers?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the outstanding work being done by our Minister of Health, George Smitherman. Is Minister Smitherman enthusiastic? You bet he is. Is he passionate about his responsibilities? You bet he is. Is he a fighter? You're darned right he is. I'm glad he's on our side, but, more importantly, I'm glad he's on the side of the people of Ontario. He is relentless at pursuing transformations that will improve the quality of their care.

Mr Runciman: Is he a bully? You bet he is.

Premier, you want to stick your head in the sand instead of showing leadership on this issue. Your own caucus members are expressing concern about the minister's strong-arm and intimidation tactics, yet you keep the blinkers on and defend the indefensible.

This morning on your local radio station, CFRA in Ottawa, the president of the OHA, the Ontario Hospital Association, Hilary Short, said that every hospital is feeling the heat right now. In this morning's Globe and Mail, the minister is quoted attacking hospital CEOs, implying that they're uncooperative fat cats, an attack that necessitated a response from the president of the Ontario Hospital Association. Is this the kind of environment you want to defend when are you're getting headlines like, "Fear and Loathing Rule at Hospitals in Ontario"? Is that your idea of good government?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I am proud of the efforts and the accomplishments of Minister George Smitherman. Let

me tell you about some of the things that he has fought for and some of his achievements: He has fought for and obtained more full-time nurses for the province; he's fighting for reduced waiting times; he's bringing home care to 21,000 more Ontarians; he's investing in community health care for the first time in over a decade; and he's making sure for the first time that our seniors, 70,000 of our parents and grandparents who are living out the remainder of their lives in our nursing homes, are entitled to two baths a week and that a registered nurse is on duty on a 24/7 basis. Yes, I am proud of the accomplishments, the achievements, the passion and the enthusiasm of our Minister of Health, George Smitherman.

Mr Runciman: Premier, as you know, this week the vice-president of child advocacy at Sick Kids Hospital, Cyndy DeGiusti, was forced to resign two days after she publicly complained about the impact your policies will have on patient care at Sick Kids. From all reports, Ms DeGiusti was an outstanding employee, truly dedicated to the young patients at Sick Kids, but she was shown the door. And you and your minister say you're innocent; your threats and a bully minister had nothing to do with it.

Premier, if you truly believe your minister's ham-fisted approach to the hospital sector had nothing to do with Ms DeGiusti's dismissal, will you support the Conservative and NDP proposal for a committee hearing into this issue? Will you do that?

1420

Hon Mr McGuinty: It is remarkable how quickly the former government would try to convince the people of Ontario that they should forget their record when it came to setting a new standard for bullying in the province of Ontario, if not in North America. I want to remind you of their record: They fired every CCAC board when they complained about cuts and asked for more money; they sent a gag order to paramedics to stop talking about ambulance delays; they bullied nurses by comparing them to Hula Hoops; they bullied pregnant women on social assistance when they took away their nutritional supplements; and they bullied everyone on social assistance when they wanted to drug-test all of them.

Again, and I will be perfectly clear and unequivocal in this regard, Minister George Smitherman is being absolutely relentless in pursuing something that is not easy: the transformation of our health care system so that together we can improve the quality of health care we deliver to all Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): First of all, I want to assure the House that I was not standing in ovation to the Premier's answer. I do have a question for the Minister of Health. In his absence, I refer it to the Premier. I see no end to your government's continued incompetence and mismanagement when it comes to dealing with Ontario's

rural communities, and that includes the hospital sector. We learned the other day that the Campbellford hospital is predicting it will close up to 19 beds and cut 21 full-time jobs. Also in the same riding we learned from Mr Cable of the Northumberland Hills Hospital that they have your ministry's approval to cut 12 of 25 complex care beds. We already know we have countless Liberal members who won't go on the record, and Mr Rinaldi is silent on the closure of the hospital beds and layoffs of medical professionals in his riding. Is Mr Rinaldi one of the Liberal members your minister is bullying into silence and submission?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to assure you that as we speak, in fact, Minister Smitherman is meeting with representatives of the OHA in order to ensure that we have a respectful ongoing dialogue, to ensure that we can proceed together with the transformation of our health care system, including ensuring that we're getting value for Ontarians, but most importantly, better quality health care for Ontario patients and their families. That's what this effort is all about; that's what this exercise is all about.

I'm pleased to report that so far, 50 Ontario hospitals have balanced their budgets and say they can live with our new accountability agreements. They say they can, in fact, continue to deliver quality services to their patients. We look forward to dealing with the hospitals on a case-by-case basis to ensure that we're getting good accountability for the money we invest in our hospitals without compromise and, in fact, improving the quality of care for patients.

Mr Hardeman: I think that answer is an embarrassment, as it goes nowhere close to answering the question that was asked. I'm sure there is time during ministers' statements when you can make statements, but I would appreciate answers to questions.

Perhaps, Premier, you can explain why the Sault Area Hospital is cutting 75 full-time jobs and has a deficit of \$6 million and growing. Given Mr Bartolucci's silence yesterday on the suspension of Dr Koka, it is clear that he's afraid to talk to you, and now he's silenced on the cuts to his own hospital. Perhaps you can tell us if Mr Bartolucci is yet another Liberal member whom you have asked not to speak out on hospital cuts and bed closures. Who will speak for the hospital in the Soo? Not anyone who doesn't want to feel the wrath of your minister. Would you stand in your place today and say that Mr Bartolucci can stand up and defend the staffing cuts at the hospital in his riding?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Speaker, the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I appreciate the—

The Speaker: Can I get the response from the Premier? I'm hearing shouting from both sides. Sometimes I hear three questions coming from one side—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Could I just hear the Premier's response, and maybe just tone down the heckling? Thank you.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm sure Ontarians are asking themselves, where was the great outcry from the members opposite when they shut down all those hospitals? Where was the outcry when they fired all those nurses? Apparently they have found religion. Apparently it's not a long journey on the road to Damascus; it's only this corridor here that separates us.

The work that we are doing is not easy, but our full and sincere intention is to ultimately improve the quality of care for Ontarians. This is what Roy Romanow said recently about what we're doing here. He said, "When I talk about sustainability with Premier McGuinty and Health Minister Smitherman in this province, I hear a strong commitment to future of publicly supported medicare, and a resolve to spending resources designed to leverage the changes necessary, rather than spending on the status quo. It seems to me that Ontario wants to do the 'real work' required to ensure medicare's sustainability." That's what we're doing.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Premier, your government's treatment of rural communities is pathetic—

Interjections: Shame, shame.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. That's highly unnecessary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. OK, we've had our fun.

Final supplementary, the member for Oxford.

Mr Hardeman: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Your government's treatment of rural communities is pathetic, whether it's hospitals or crisis intervention centres for farmers. Ministry officials have been handing out crisis intervention packages to farmers suffering from mental distress because your government has done nothing to address their needs. It includes a 1-800 number for farmers desperate for help and on the brink of losing everything. We called that number and to our horror the crisis line was disconnected, referring callers to a 1-900 crisis number where you can pay \$2.99 a minute. The farmer in desperation will hear a recording saying, "The crisis service is no longer available."

Premier, not only have you silenced your members but you have silenced farmers in crisis. Will you address your government's incompetence and assure us today that crisis intervention hotlines for farmers will be reinstated immediately?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Speaker, I'm not sure how this flows from the original line of questioning related to health care. I know it is in the opposition's interest to try to exploit regional differences in the province of Ontario, but we feel a responsibility on this side of the House to move the province forward and all Ontarians together.

Just to set the record straight with respect to what we're doing in rural Ontario, recently our Minister of Education committed \$31 million strictly for rural schools. We have recently announced another \$30 million for our BSE recovery funding program. That's in addition to the original \$92 million already delivered. We have also committed \$20 million in nutrient management assistance and another \$10 million for the Ontario cull animal strategy.

Speaker, I see you are telling me that my time is over, and I thank you for this opportunity.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your health minister's bullying has created a culture of fear at Ontario's hospitals. The Sick Kids child advocate criticizes your hospital cuts on Saturday and by Monday she loses her job. Officials say she is gone because you're strong-arming hospitals to keep quiet.

From Kapuskasing to Campbellford and from Hamilton to Ottawa, hospital workers are afraid to speak out about your hospital cuts because they fear they may be the next to go. Even one of your Liberal backbenchers agrees your health minister is bullying. He said, "My community isn't happy. Some of these people are volunteers. They don't deserve that."

Ordinary Ontarians want peace and better results, not your health minister's intimidation and bullying. You've banned pit bulls in the province of Ontario. Why don't you muzzle and leash your health minister, stop the bullying and get on with the real job of ensuring that hospitals have a budget?

1430

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I find that beneath the dignity that we should all attempt to attach to this Legislature. Let me say this: I know it is, again, in the interest of the members of the opposition to describe what is going on in their self-serving and idiosyncratic way. But what is actually happening is that there are all kinds of people speaking out. There are all kinds of people who have the opportunity to express their disagreement or concern with the approach that we're bringing to transforming health care generally, and how we deliver care in our hospitals more specifically. We expect that. That is healthy. It's important that we continue to have that dialogue and that debate.

But let me say this on behalf of this government: We will be relentless. We will not shrink from our responsibility to continue to bring about the kind of change that will put our health care system on a sustainable footing and the kind of change that will improve the quality of care that we deliver to Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: Premier, today the health minister met with the Ontario Hospital Association. Here's what the hospitals had to say: "Any charges by Minister Smitherman that hospitals are reluctant to change or look for

savings are unfounded and unfair to the managers of our hospitals and to the 3,000 voluntary hospital trustees who govern with such commitment under increasingly difficult circumstances." And they go on: "Hospitals have patients walking through our doors each and every day. Dismantling the hospital system piece by piece, before the new system is in place, poses a huge risk to patient care."

And what did your Minister of Health have to say? Your Minister of Health said he's "loving" all the media attention he's getting as a result of his hospital cuts.

Premier, will you tell the people of Ontario why they should be loving your approach to health care when all they are seeing from your bullying, intimidation and cuts is more and more threat to their community hospitals and more and more threat to patient care?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think the leader of the third party knows full well that Ontarians are seeing much more activity than just the dialogue that we're having with our hospitals. They're seeing more full-time nurses. They're seeing the commitment we made to increase cardiac procedures by 36,000, cataracts by 9,000, hip and knee replacements by 2,300. They're seeing a brand new vaccination program that's going to vaccinate two million children over the course of the next three years. They see the changes we're making in home care, bringing home care to 100,000 more Ontarians.

Let me say this to all those people who commit themselves, who dedicate themselves and devote themselves to the quality of care we are delivering at present in our hospitals: We commend them, we thank them, we value them, but we also want to work with them. We ultimately have a responsibility to bring about a transformation in health care. We're going to do that, and we're going to do that working with our hospitals.

Mr Hampton: It will be news to people out there in the hospital system that you're working with them. Yesterday, the minister was attacking the hospital boards and administrators. Today, furious George was going after front-line health care workers. Instead of addressing your government's short funding of hospitals, now he's going to wage war on the lowest-paid, most vulnerable workers in our hospitals. And, Premier, you should know who these workers are. Most of them are women. He says either their wages should be slashed or their jobs and their pensions and benefits should be contracted out.

Is this the McGuinty government's definition of efficiency: cutting the wages, the pensions and the benefits of the lowest-paid health care workers, attacking the most vulnerable workers? Is this what you meant by "Choose change"?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is nothing but pure, unadulterated invention. The minister has never suggested anything in that regard. What we have done—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member from Simcoe North, come to order. New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Premier: Instead of ducking the scrums, you go outside the House afterwards, because

that's exactly what Mr Smitherman, furious George, said to the media earlier today.

But the issue is this: It is time to muzzle your pit bull. It is time to start working with hospitals instead of attacking them. You say you don't have the money. Well, here is the equation, Premier. You're getting \$825 million in new federal money. You've got \$2 billion squirreled away in your budget in contingency fees.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour, would you come to order, please.

Mr Hampton: I don't think the Liberals like hearing these questions, Speaker.

You've got another \$1 billion from your new health tax. Add it up. That's \$4 billion you're sitting on, which is supposed to go, or can go, to health care.

My advice, Premier, and I'm asking you to do it: Will you stop your health minister from attacking the hospitals, from attacking the boards of hospitals, from going after the lowest-paid workers in the hospitals, and sit down and work on their budget problems?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's always interesting and entertaining to listen to the NDP leader's particular interpretation of the facts. We are investing more money in hospitals than ever before, and we feel a responsibility to ensure that we get value for patients with that additional investment. So we've decided, for the first time, that we're insisting hospitals enter into accountability agreements. We want to ensure the money actually translates into better quality services. We think that's important to do on behalf of Ontario patients.

If people ask us whose side we're on, whether on the side of the doctors or the hospitals, we're on the side of Ontario patients. The whole thrust of our effort is to ensure that the additional money, the record amount of money we are investing in hospitals in Ontario, \$11.3 billion this year, actually results in better quality services for the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Premier, let me give you an example of what's going on out there. While you pocket \$825 million of new federal health care money, in Sault Ste Marie they're laying off 75 hospital staff—40 of them are in nursing—and money will actually be taken out of their budget for drugs that are used to battle cancer. We already know about Sick Kids—\$45 million. Almost every hospital in northern Ontario is facing a serious budget deficit, and they all agree they're going to have to cut or delay services to try to meet your budget restrictions.

Meanwhile, you've got the \$825 million of federal money, you've got the new health tax money and you've got \$2 billion in contingency reserve. Why don't you sit down with the hospitals and try to work some of this out instead of sending out your pit bull to attack hospital workers and hospital administrators?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again I fundamentally reject the categorization the leader of the NDP brings to this. Maybe he doesn't know, but I said a moment ago and I'll say again that the Minister of Health has just returned

from a meeting with representatives of the OHA. He does that kind of thing on a regular basis.

In keeping with the hospitals' request, we have given them 18 months to find a way to balance their budgets. We've established a brand new seven-step process, working together with them. We've only gone through the first step. The members opposite would have us believe that all of these things and challenges that are connected with hospitals have somehow derived from this new approach we're bringing to funding our hospitals. That is in fact not the case. The Minister of Health is determined to work with our hospitals to ensure we can improve the quality of their health care, and he will continue to do that.

1440

Mr Hampton: Premier, going out and attacking the lowest-paid hospital workers is not a new approach. We saw that for eight years. Going out and attacking hospital administrators and the volunteer boards of hospitals is not a new approach. People saw that for eight years.

What the people of Ontario want is peace in their health care system. They want to see that new federal money and the new health tax money invested in real services. They don't want to see their community hospitals cut. They don't want to see more cuts like the cuts to chiropractors, cuts to physiotherapists, cuts to optometrists. They've had enough. They have seen that for eight years.

You, Premier, promised change. You, Premier, said, "Choose change." You got the federal money; you got the new health tax money. Where's the change, Premier? All we see is the same old tired agenda, the same old attack on hospitals and hospital workers. Where is the change?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The leader of the NDP and I part company on this, as we do on many other issues. He would say, "Listen, you got some money from the feds. You got the new premium money. Just send it over to the hospitals. We don't really give a darn as to what way they spend it."

We're bringing a different approach on behalf of all taxpayers and Ontario patients. We are insisting that we get value for that new money. We are insisting that we improve the quality of care as a result of that additional investment that we are making in our hospitals.

The leader of the NDP is a staunch defender of the status quo. I accept that. He'll be there for a long time. He has championed the status quo for a long time. We're not going back there. We're moving forward with the transformation of our health care system. We're moving forward with our plan to improve the quality of care for Ontario families.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Premier, and it's a very clear message. You may want to stand by while your bully minister beats up our hospital executives, but those of us in the opposition are not going to stand by and allow this fear and intimidation to continue.

Cyndy DeGiusti has an important job. Her job is to go to work every day and defend children's health care services as a children's advocate. On Saturday, she spoke out about the bullying tactics of your government and the cuts to patient services. She showed up for work on Monday morning and, much like Donald Trump, she was fired.

Premier, will you not stand in your place and join those of us on this side of the House in calling for an immediate public hearing into this tragedy affecting children in the province of Ontario? Would you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is just a little hard to endure coming from the then Minister of Community and Social Services who proposed that we drug-test welfare recipients in the province of Ontario. That would be his idea of a progressive, modern, responsible approach when it comes to public policy.

There is not a shred of evidence that links the departure of that particular employee with this government or its actions. I have said publicly, as has the Minister of Health: If anybody is the butt end of negative treatment of any kind as a result of criticizing this government, we say that is wrong. We are big enough to take on any kind of criticism, constructive or otherwise, and we look forward to a healthy, vigorous, passionate debate as we improve health care in Ontario.

Mr Baird: What we're talking about is the climate of fear and intimidation that is experienced right across our health care system and your inability to even address the problem.

In our home community of Ottawa, the hospitals are in crisis. The Ottawa Hospital is looking right now at plans to lay off nurses and plans to increase patient waiting times for important procedures.

In last year's election, on page 12 of your campaign document Excellence for All, you said that you wanted to help communities have "the necessary training to implement effective anti-bullying measures." You said, "It is time to put an end to bullying." Premier, will you stand in your place and say there is no room for bullying by your bully minister in our health care system? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, this coming from a member from the Ottawa community who now purports to be a champion of health care. I ask him, on behalf of the people of Ontario and the in excess of 100,000 who signed a petition to save the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, where was he when his government decided they were going to shut down the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and remove that important and valuable resource for the people of eastern Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Nepean-Carleton, I'm calling you to order. I will regard this as a warning.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I might ask him as well, where was he when his government decided that they wanted to shut down the l'hôpital Montfort that also benefits the people of eastern Ontario?

Here's an interesting observation made by the then parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, John O'Toole, who said, "Some would say she"—in reference to then Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer—"ran away with the cheque book but somebody else got the cheques. We spent a ton and got not as much as we would have liked."

We are spending a record amount on hospital funding in Ontario, and we are determined to ensure that we get value for taxpayers and, more important than that, that we get better quality of care for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: It seems to me it's a day of naming people. I will start doing that now, because I want to get on with question period. And while I'm at it, there's a lot of loose language here, unparliamentary language. I would like you to refrain from doing that.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Around the province, hospital officials will be forced to cut programs, beds and services because you refuse to adequately provide operational funding to these hospitals, but there is more to the problem. The Ontario Hospital Association reports that more than 30 badly needed capital projects are now on hold because your government won't commit the funding to these projects. This year, you're going to receive \$825 million in new federal funding and you also have another \$2 billion in unallocated funds sitting in reserves. You've got the money. Will you do the right thing and finally release the cheques so these capital projects can proceed?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Health is anxious to speak to this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As I've had the opportunity a few times in the House this week on issues with respect to capital projects, I'm happy to repeat for the honourable member that I'm working very closely on this file with my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I do acknowledge that there are quite a few projects out there that have expectations of funding. This was created in part measure by the presentations by that party while in government of cheques which, when taken to the bank, bounced. The reality beyond that is that we do have an obligation to ensure that any capital project that moves forward has appropriate operational funding associated with it. We do expect to be in a position reasonably soon to offer some go-forward for projects in Ontario, and we're going to do so in keeping with our plans to transform the health care system in Ontario.

Ms Martel: Let me give you an example of a project that has been delayed. The St Peter's hospital project in Hamilton is a clear example of how your failure to fund these projects is really hurting patient care. Two projects at St Peter's were approved in August 2003—urgent

upgrades of badly dilapidated facilities and a 90-bed facility for young people with disabilities. The government shared the project with 62% of a \$33-million total project, with community fundraising for the balance. The community funding is secure. Everything is ready to go, but your government has refused to give the go-ahead and the funding to start this project. Let me repeat: Your government has some \$3 billion sitting unallocated this year that could be used for these important projects. I ask you again, will you cut the cheques today and fund these badly needed hospital projects?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm not getting into the new math that the honourable member is using, but I am happy to say—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Member for Nickel Belt, you asked the question; now hear the response.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Nickel Belt.

1450

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to say that on Saturday night I'll be attending Mayor Larry Di Ianni's gala for St Peter's Hospital to raise money for the academic specialty hospital unit for young adults with disabilities.

Here's what the CEO of St Peter's Hospital has to say about me and my involvement with those projects: "George Smitherman is the only Minister of Health" that he has seen in his hospital. "George Smitherman has been nothing but supportive of the hospital project. He has been fair and met with patients and staff."

The ministry has already provided over \$1.8 million for two hospital projects to support their planning efforts. The key point here is, like many other hospitals in the province of Ontario, we're working co-operatively with St Peter's on the development of their plan. We hope to be able to make announcements with respect to these projects shortly.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, today you announced that you would be banning junk food in all elementary schools. I support this decision and have seen first-hand how banning junk food in schools contributes to healthier food choices for students. A year ago, York region public school board removed all vending machines and junk food from school property. Educators, parents and students supported this decision.

A 15-year research study published in the journal *Obesity Research* in May 2003 found that at least one in four children is overweight in Canada, compared to one in 10 in 1981. Childhood obesity can lead to a number of health problems such as diabetes, and children who are obese tend to grow into obese adults. Minister, why is this announcement today important?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member for Markham for his interest in this subject and in the well-being of students. It's just a small step that we're taking today. Making it comprehensive, in answer to the member, was really just a way of summarizing the consensus that exists. Parents want us to do this; so do the school and the school principals. The school I was at today, Parkdale public, a fine school in this area, said, "Thank you for giving us the guidelines, the ability now to work with parents and work with our own school communities."

What the Dietitians of Canada provided today was a practical list, an idea which I think everyone in this House would probably join in promoting, that students should be able to make those good choices when they're young enough to be impressionable and that that high intake of sugar and the veering away from good foods is something we all need to do our own small part on, and these guidelines help to do that.

Mr Wong: I'm pleased to hear that our government is taking a proactive approach to childhood obesity and putting preventive measures in our schools. We've heard before of this government's commitment to making Ontario's schools healthier. Encouraging healthy eating by removing junk foods from schools is one step. What other measures are we taking to ensure that our education system is keeping Ontario's children healthy?

Hon Mr Kennedy: Just as the government has an outlook to have Ontarians in general be healthier, we have a healthier schools outlook, and we're working closely with colleagues like the Minister of Tourism and Recreation on an initiative that would, for example, put back in our schools community use of gymnasiums, classrooms and fields that had been locked up by previous governments that didn't support the idea that schools should be a community hub for those students—that they have those after-hours activities—and for the rest of the community as well.

Further, there has been a downgrading of physical activity in our schools. We need to do something about that, and we're looking for mandatory physical activity for all elementary students. Again, some of the members opposite I know come from the last century, and they think it's wrong for us to lay out guidelines for young children to be able to participate in our schools and to be able to direct them. We believe there's a stronger community consensus, and it's about doing what we can to head off exactly what the member prefaced his question with: obesity, heart problems and things that we can do something about. It's a smart government that does that when they have the chance.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The farmers of the province are in crisis. The crisis is not of their own making, and they have to depend on programs like CAIS to help them make ends meet when their farms are in

peril. Your government has the responsibility of delivering this funding to farmers. Part of this responsibility is to deliver it in a timely fashion. But, Minister, your lack of clear processes for farmers to follow has meant that the CAIS program is absolutely dysfunctional. Your own government estimates that 16,000 farmers across the province did not submit what the ministry considers to be a complete application. I have a suspicion that some of this group is from my riding, but I expect they come from every rural riding across the province. Your ministry has only just admitted the serious failings of this program and now plans to contact everyone who tried to apply for the program. It is not acceptable that you are leaving farmers in the lurch, knowing how close many of them are to losing their homes, their farms and their livelihoods.

Minister, what steps are you going to take to speed up the CAIS program, not just for the farmers who are currently in the backlog, but also for those responding to the letter asking for more information?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As of the end of September, over \$25 million has flowed to farmers in this province as a result of the CAIS program, so I don't agree with her statement that the dollars aren't flowing. Certainly we recognize that we had almost 30,000 applications for CAIS and that a number of those applications were not complete. We are working with those farmers to ensure those applications are updated and turned around as quickly as possible. I ask the member to be conscious of the fact, and we are conscious of the fact, that we need to get money out as quickly as possible. Ministry staff—and I ask you to stand up and support ministry staff—are working as quickly as possible to deliver those dollars to the agricultural community.

Ms Scott: The applications started to come in at the end of April, and some were extended to the end of June. That's four to six months. That's a long period of time for farmers to be waiting. It's a very serious matter. As you know, farmers are very proud individuals and they do not seek financial help frivolously. I want to remind the minister and everyone here that the barn doors are silently closing, farms are going out of business and the economics of our community are going downhill.

When you add 16,000 more farmers to the end of your backlog, do you have any plan to handle this? How many months are the farmers going to have to wait? Is that going to be another 16 weeks on top of what they have already been waiting, four to six months? Farmers are losing their homes. Minister, tell us how you're going to solve this catastrophe affecting our farmers.

Hon Mr Peters: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would welcome it if there is any specific farmer within your constituency—quite honestly, for any of my colleagues who are here in the Legislature right now, if there's a particular farmer who has extreme hardship, we're going to work with you. We're going to work with that farmer to make sure those dollars can flow as quickly as possible.

This government is committed to supporting the farmers of this province. The Premier announced in February—we delivered \$64 million in transition funding to farmers. We embarked on the mature animal strategy because we wanted to do something for the long term. We've invested in abattoir capacity in this province, the very thing the federal government has said we need to do.

I want to thank the Premier for his support, and my colleagues around the cabinet table, for coming forward to match the federal funding. We're coming forward with an additional \$30 million to support the cattle industry in this province. As we speak, we're working in consultation with the cattle industry to make sure we get it right, unlike your government, which designed programs on the back of a tablecloth and didn't get it right and didn't ensure dollars flowed to farmers. We're going to make sure dollars get where they're supposed to, and that's in the farmers' pockets.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. The proposed Great Lakes annex will allow the eight Great Lakes states to divert unlimited water from the Great Lakes water basin that we all share. What's worse, Ontario will not be able to veto such water-takings, which will seriously threaten the levels of the Great Lakes. There are no set limits on how much water can be diverted. There is no time limit on those diversions. The Council of Canadians, legal experts like Steven Shrybman, the Sierra legal fund and others echo that it effectively gives free rein to the US to remove our water to service sprawl. Premier, do you support this annex giving the US the power to drain Ontario's Great Lakes?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The minister will speak to this.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): As the member knows, the government of Canada and the government of Ontario absolutely prohibit the diversion of water from the Great Lakes. That is the law in this province, and that is the law in this country. What a lot of people don't understand is that no such law is present in the United States, either at the state level or the federal level.

Over the years, Quebec and Ontario have been trying to engage the eight neighbouring Great Lakes states to start to bring their thinking around to thinking, as we do, that this is a precious resource, that the ecosystem of the Great Lakes must be protected and that they start to think the way we do about protecting that and preventing diversions.

1500

Ms Churley: Premier, I really would like to hear your response to this. It's a very serious matter before us, and your minister is obviously ignoring a very important, legal analysis that says that this agreement undermines the integrity of the Great Lakes and our water. You campaigned to stop water-taking that damages the environ-

ment and depletes water tables. The agreement opens the floodgates for water to be taken out of the Great Lakes; there's a body of opinion that says that.

I'm going to ask you, Premier, will you agree to not sign this very flawed annex agreement so that a new agreement can be made that gives Ontario, not the US states, the power to protect our own Great Lakes from thirsty US developers? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I would say to the member that, as she knows, we are in a consultation stage right with this charter annex proposal. The deadline has just ended, and obviously we are collating all the responses we have had from this consultation.

But I think the member needs to appreciate that while there's a strict prohibition on diversion on the Canadian side, both provincially and federally, the Americans don't have that. For the first time, we have engaged the Americans to start thinking about the lakes as we do. What we're talking about now is getting the states for the first time, if they agree, to start passing their own laws in their own jurisdictions to control and prevent any major diversion from the Great Lakes. By putting it into law, we would be able to access their courts and force them to enforce their law.

We're looking at this. We're listening to the consultation and pushing for Canada's position: to have no diversions from the Great Lakes.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. During your recent visit to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, you had the opportunity to interact with and hear the concerns of residents of my constituency in the agricultural industry.

During your visit, you reinforced our government's proactive approach with regard to ensuring public safety with new agricultural regulations, such as nutrient management, and the new provincial water regulations. However, a major concern that my constituents had during your visit, and which you heard, was the cost incurred by the agricultural sector in complying with these regulations. Public safety is of the utmost concern to the agricultural sector in Ontario. However, the farmers of the province are struggling financially. Can you tell this House how our government is going to aid the agricultural industry to ensure compliance with the Nutrient Management Act?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I think this is a government that has clearly demonstrated that we are committed to implementing Justice O'Connor's Walkerton report. We're moving forward with what he identified as where we should move forward first, and that's on the largest agricultural operations in this province. That's why we've committed, over a two-year period, \$20 million to assist those 1,200 largest farms in this province to move forward to meet the Nutrient Management Act and regulations. We're

working very closely with the nutrient management advisory committee to make sure that we get it right.

This is a government that is concerned about the environment, but we also recognize that we can't put the burden solely on the backs of the farmers. That's why government has to come to the table. Our dollars, combined with federal dollars, will provide up to 75% of funding for those 1,200 largest farms, which, incidentally, generate 30% of the nutrients in this province. We're going to work with farmers. We're going to work with groups like OFEC to make sure we get it right.

Mr Brownell: I'm pleased to hear that the ministry will work with the farmers of the province and match the dates of compliance with the availability of provincial funding. I laud you for recognizing the need for such assistance, and I recognize the need for this program in my constituency. In order for farmers in my riding to take advantage of funding, it is essential that they are aware of programs that are in existence. Minister, can you tell how and when farmers can apply for funding—you talked about the larger farming community—and who is administering the program?

Hon Mr Peters: This program will be delivered through the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association. We've contracted to work with them. These are demonstrated leaders in understanding the soil and crops of this province, and we're going to be working with them.

As well, I think it's important to note that the focus here is on the 1,200 largest farms. We're going to be working with the Ministry of the Environment, with the nutrient management advisory committee, and we're conscious of the source water protection legislation that's going to be coming along. As the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition clearly pointed out, we need to make sure that the Nutrient Management Act and source water protection fit together. That's why the Ministry of the Environment and myself are going to be working very closely together to make sure that we get this right, because we know that the opportunities for nutrients to escape from a farm and into a watercourse don't necessarily go by farm size. That's why, be it a large farm or a small farm, we're going to work with the Ministry of the Environment to make sure that nutrient management and source water protection move forward on phasing in the other agricultural operations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Minister, you've just finished saying that you're providing nutrient management funding of \$20 million for large operations. However, the George Morris Centre, commissioned by your government, reveals compliance costs for nutrient management will be a staggering \$235 million to \$609 million. Minister, does your government have a policy here to put our farmers at a competitive disadvantage? Are you putting farmers out of business?

Hon Mr Peters: I welcome this question on a couple of fronts. We firmly believe, as we've announced on the \$20 million that we're moving forward with, that there is

a role and an obligation for government to be there to help farmers phase in. That's why we're moving forward on the 1,200 largest operations.

As a responsible government, we realized too that we needed to get an accurate picture of the true costs of implementing the Nutrient Management Act. That's why we commissioned the George Morris Centre to bring forward that report, which clearly shows that there is a substantial cost. Unlike the previous government, this government is prepared to make sure we don't hide anything from the public. That government and the previous Minister of Agriculture commissioned from the very same entity a report to look at the impact. They printed it on purple paper and never released it. We put the information out. We made it available to the farmers in this province. You never released that information. You didn't have the guts to do it. This government has the guts. We're going to work with the agricultural community.

Mr Barrett: In contrast to what you've just said, in that same announcement you've delayed the nutrient management compliance deadline to December 31, 2005. Like the beef set-aside program, there are no application forms; there may not be forms until March 2005. We know you've already budgeted \$5 million in funding for this fiscal year, but without those application forms farmers have no way to access the money. Also, that funding is part of a transition fund. If the \$5 million is not used this year, it's lost. Does this mean the \$20 million you've just announced may, in effect, only be \$15 million by the end of the program?

Hon Mr Peters: Perhaps the honourable member should speak to organizations like the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition or the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, with whom I participated and made sure I had a conversation with last week.

During the first two weeks of November, there are going to be consultation sessions taking place all across the province. The closest one to the honourable member will be held in the Ancaster-Dundas area. At that point—those first two weeks in November—the application forms and the full details of the nutrient management assistance program are going to be made available to the farmers, so that they know very clearly.

The honourable member made mention of the date. Unfortunately, your government put in place a date for farmers to comply with that was not achievable. We're prepared to work with farmers in this province. That's why we've asked the farmers to have a completed nutrient management strategy in place by March 31. We're going to give them time, through the end of the year, to meet the opportunities to comply with this new legislation. We're going to work with farmers, unlike you.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I saw you out there reading your documents, and I wanted to give you a chance.

Minister, you will know that in the developmentally handicapped sector, when it comes to community supports, community organizations across the province are having to reduce services because of a lack of funding, a situation that's been going on for some time. For example, in the city of Timmins, we have one organization that is potentially going to be closing down two group homes for the developmentally handicapped in our community if something is not done; this with 20 people on waiting lists to get into those particular group homes. In other organizations in the community, when it comes to services for the developmentally handicapped, we have services in the community being cut. What is your plan to deal with what is starting to become a very serious situation for the developmentally handicapped across this province for community services?

1510

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate the question. As you know, historically, in the last 30 years all governments have continued to put more money into developmental services. It is an area that is probably the least partisan of all government activity. What has happened is that volume and demand increased exponentially, far exceeding any funding that governments have traditionally continued to put in developmental services. This has left us with huge dilemmas. How do we find funding to meet the gaps in services that we know exist in this sector? This is what we are working on every day. The example that this MPP is giving, the number of agencies that he deals with locally—he and I worked together on several of these issues for families in his region. I can tell this member and the agencies in his community that we are working on a complete policy review to see how we can improve the delivery of services to that community, because we understand the gaps that do exist.

Mr Bisson: Minister, the community organizations, as you well know, are working on those things themselves. What they've been looking for is for the government to fund those things they've long recommended, and that's what this issue is.

I'm further worried because I was at a press conference earlier this summer where you announced the closure of the last three institutions in this province where developmentally handicapped people reside. We're going to take the last thousand people in those institutions, who admittedly were the hardest to serve when it came to moving them out of the services some years ago, with community supports that are ill-equipped to deal with what's in the community now. I say to you, Minister, that if we can't deal with what's in the community now when it comes to providing services to the developmentally handicapped, how in the heck are we going to deal with that as you close the last three institutions and put the last thousand people into communities that are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to deal with the input?

Hon Ms Papatello: Again I want to say that I was pleased to see that this MPP attended that press conference, because it was a historic moment where we moved forward, to where other parties of other governments have been all along, to finally close institutional care in the developmental sector in Ontario to join other jurisdictions that will not use institutional care but rather have moved to community-based services.

We, I think, in this House all agree: We do have concerns that we will prepare the community to serve the individuals who will be moved into the community. I will tell this member that there will not be an individual moving from the institution to the community unless that community is ready to receive that person and those supports are there. In the 13 facility closures that have happened in the history of government, those supports were in the community before those people were moved. I will tell this member as well that a \$110-million announcement that came along with that facility closure announcement secures additional funding in this sector as we move to grow the capacity of services for developmental individuals.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Parts of the agribusiness sector in Ontario are having a record year. Now, for example, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario are here today, and we welcome them. But as you know, Minister, other sectors are facing unprecedented challenges.

As the member for Perth-Middlesex, I'm keenly aware of the devastatingly negative impacts of the continued border closure of Ontario cattle to the US market. I want to give my farmers some hope. I understand that today there was a major announcement in regard to the Chinese market. Could you explain its significance to the beef and dairy farmers of Perth-Middlesex?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I would like to thank the member from Pork-Middlesex—pardon me, Perth-Middlesex, the pork capital of Ontario—for that. I think it's important to recognize and we need to commend the federal government for moving forward on signing two protocols with the government of China to restore trade in livestock genetics. This is one of the first positive signs that we have seen in the past 17 months. I know, in speaking with the federal minister, that there are other initiatives in place. But this is definitely going to help the farmers of this province. This is, I think, going to help send the message to other governments that Canadian cattle are safe.

Mr Wilkinson: That's just great news. Minister, as you know, last Friday the US imposed a punitive duty on Ontario pork. As you mentioned, pork is huge in my riding. This is a direct threat to the success of the many pork producers in my riding.

On Monday, along with my seatmate, the member for Markham, who's the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I was at a reception where the Premier spoke. It was a reception in honour of all the Consuls General who have offices here in Toronto. He was kind enough to introduce me to Madam Chen, the Consul General for the People's Republic of China. We discussed the punitive US duty. I asked her if her country would be interested in expanding our agricultural trade. She said yes. She's arranging a meeting.

Minister, would you be prepared to meet with representatives from the People's Republic of China?

Hon Mr Peters: In response to the member, certainly, I look forward to the opportunity to meet with the Chinese officials, because what we need to do is try to develop new trade opportunities. That's why I want to commend the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, Pat Hoy, who's been working very hard with the Korean delegation to try and develop new markets for not only Canadian beef but Canadian pork, which is ultimately going to help pork producers in your riding. That's why it's great to have the Chicken Farmers of Ontario here today, because they play a very important role in the agricultural economy of this province.

That's why we stand up. We made sure that Ontario had a place at the table in Geneva at the world trade talks. We were there defending the interests of supply management. We were there defending the interests of individuals like these chicken farmers who are here today. We're going to stand up and do everything we can to resume trade. It is unfortunate that we've seen the border closed to beef and the additional duties that are being imposed on the swine industry, but we're going to continue to stand up and advocate for Ontario farmers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That brings us to the end of question period.

Hon Mr Peters: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to correct the record on a comment that was made in the House here earlier today. There was a comment raised about a telephone number, a farm crisis line. There is a farm crisis—

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: One at a time. That's not a point of order.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier in question period, the Minister of Health referred to a document where he quoted Grant Walsh, the CEO of St Peter's hospital. I'd like that document tabled in the House.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. All who are leaving the Legislature now, maybe you'd do so quietly. As a former Speaker used to say, when the Speaker is standing, I would like members to be sitting. Be seated. It brings a bit of order to the place.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I support the petition and sign it.

1520

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have hundreds more of these petitions coming in about the cuts to health services. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

GO TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from the Lisgar Residents' Association, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO ... stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As one of those residents, I affix my signature.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas gasoline prices have increased at alarming rates during the past year; and

"Whereas the high and different gas prices in different areas of Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship on hard-working Cambridge families;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(2) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government and the federal Martin Liberal government immediately lower their taxes on gas for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(3) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately initiate a royal commission to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario."

I sign that.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition that reads, "We Deserve Better: It's Time for a Raise!"

It says:

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because the minimum wage was frozen at \$6.85 for almost nine years, despite significant increases to the cost of living; and

"Because the McGuinty Liberals have raised it by a mere 30 cents and \$7.15 is still far too low; and

"Because a full-time worker earning the current minimum wage in a large city is almost \$6,000 below the poverty line, and to reach the poverty line would need an hourly wage of at least \$10; and

"Because the minimum wage should provide people with an adequate standard of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the minimum wage to at least the poverty line—that means \$10 an hour—and index it to the cost of living."

I support this petition.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of residents in the Lisgar area. It is about access to trades and professions in Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I affix my signature and ask Anthony to carry it.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

I have signed this, and it has come from my riding.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I agree, and I've signed this petition.

1530

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislature, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners, and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP, and the coverage for those services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I affix my name in full support.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and especially to the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St Clair Avenue West to study the potential transit improvements;

"Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;"

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: I think this petition is of such importance that the member may want to listen to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Order. Continue, please.

Mr Ruprecht: That's right. The member may want to listen to this petition because of the importance of the very subject.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue with the petition, please.

Mr Ruprecht: "Whereas the comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to this EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would restrict left-turn access to neighbouring streets;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to local streets;

"Whereas safety must be a high priority;

"Whereas a right-of-way would lead to the reduction or elimination of on-street parking;

"Whereas traffic bottlenecks at certain intersections and underpasses are already terrible;

"Whereas the road would have substantial negative economic impact on local businesses;

"Whereas there is no guarantee that a dedicated road will improve transit service substantially, as the number of streetcars serving the streets will actually be reduced;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Ministry of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community."

Since I agree with this wholeheartedly, I'm glad to sign it as well.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with special needs and their families throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region—for families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and, in August, the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

OPPOSITION DAY

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIE AGRICOLE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the government:

To recognize the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget has been reduced by over 20%;

To reinstate full and future funding to the municipal outlet drainage program, which has been cut and given only temporary transition funding;

To reinstate full and future funding to the genetic research programs of Ontario dairy herd improvement, Ontario swine improvement and beef improvement organizations, so that Ontario food quality and safety will continue to excel;

To provide BSE funding to Ontario's ruminant industry quickly as is being done in other provinces; and

To call upon Premier McGuinty to fulfill his campaign promise to support the farmers of Ontario by doing these things immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Hardeman has moved:

That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To recognize the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget has been reduced by over 20%;

To reinstate full and future funding to the municipal outlet drainage program, which has been cut and given only temporary transition funding;

To reinstate full and future funding to the genetic research programs of Ontario dairy herd improvement, Ontario swine improvement and beef improvement organizations, so that Ontario food quality and safety will continue to excel;

To provide BSE funding to Ontario's ruminant industry quickly as is being done in other provinces; and

To call upon Premier McGuinty to fulfill his campaign promise to support the farmers of Ontario by doing these things immediately.

Mr Hardeman. The member for Leeds-Grenville.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Hardeman, you have the floor first. If you yield the floor, it goes in rotation to the next person.

Mr Hardeman: I would ask for unanimous consent to let Mr Runciman speak first.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Hardeman has asked for unanimous consent that Mr Runciman speak first on this motion.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): And that he speak second.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't hear him say that.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: That Mr Runciman speak first and that Mr Hardeman speak second. Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I want to thank Mr Hardeman for his generosity, and I also want to thank him for tabling this motion. It's an indication of the member's commitment to the farming community in rural Ontario and the residents of rural Ontario, and of his deep faith in maintaining a way of life that is regrettably under severe stress at the moment.

I wanted to lead off as the Leader of the Opposition, albeit temporarily—we're not sure how temporary—by indicating the support of the leader of our party, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, Mr John Tory, for this, being the first opposition day in this session of the Legislature. I think it indicates the commitment of our caucus with respect to representing and making sure the concerns of rural Ontarians are heard in the Ontario Legislature, and hopefully they will be recognized by the government of the day.

To a significant degree, that isn't the case as we speak. We have seen a number of situations occur. I represent a riding that has a significant rural component, and I know that the folks living in rural Ontario are under living situations and working situations they have not experienced in my lifetime and their lifetimes. We're seeing people leaving the farming community, under significant stress. A lot of it can be attributed to the mad cow crisis—I think that's an appropriate description—and the fallout from mad cow.

It's not just the beef farmers who are facing these challenges. As a result of this, we're seeing a ripple

effect, and it's slowly but surely having an impact on many others: dairy farmers and their ability to get rid of cull cows; we're seeing it with feed dealers who are now facing situations where they are having difficulty maintaining and continuing in business because of the shortfall in income for many in the farming community; farm equipment dealers; and those who operate a range of small businesses in rural Ontario, like a grocery store, a hardware store, whatever it might be, who are now also suffering from the impacts that have trickled down, if you will, from the mad cow crisis.

1540

Just recently we saw the Kingston Stockyards closing and the family—I think it's the Martin family—who had run that business for many years losing that family business and losing their own home when the bank made a decision to foreclose. Those are the kinds of difficult situations we're seeing.

I met recently with representatives of the OFA in the Leeds-Grenville area, and they were describing to me some of the stresses their families are under. We don't have statistics—I don't have them, and perhaps we may hear some later today—about suicide rates and marriage breakdowns, those kinds of traumatic situations that many in rural Ontario are facing today.

Our role here as the official opposition is to talk about the Liberal government's response, and it has been sad to say the least. What have they done? They have delayed the safety net payouts, they have delayed supports with respect to mad cow—in fact, the Premier had to be embarrassed into even announcing money. After he was booed at the plowing match, he miraculously came up with money with respect to BSE. I call that government by crowd reaction.

We have things like a farmer can't take a cow to the local abattoir to have it slaughtered and cut for his own family's use because of initiatives by this government. You can take a deer, but you can't take a cow for local use. Water regulations are another situation causing serious problems in rural Ontario. This Liberal government is going to close down community and church halls because of their intransigence. We have a Minister of Agriculture who said he was going to be a strong spokesman on behalf of rural Ontario. That just isn't happening. They have no faith in him. They have no confidence in him to speak up and fight for them around the cabinet table. It just is not happening.

Mr Hardeman: Today I stand to present this motion to draw attention to the fact this government has cut over 20% from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget, and important programs such as the municipal outlet drainage program and genetic research funding to Ontario dairy herd improvement, Ontario swine improvement and the beef improvement organizations have suffered as a result.

I want to draw attention to the lack of understanding this government has shown by cutting programs without regard to consequences and with no consultation with the people who are directly affected. I want to draw attention

to the incompetence this government has shown in the administration of its programs by not getting transition funding to farmers who have been waiting for a year, and by not being ready to distribute BSE funds as soon as they were available.

I want to draw attention to this government's failure to keep its election promise of showing support for Ontario's farmers by making the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food a lead ministry at the cabinet table. I will show that this government is not making agriculture a lead ministry; it's actually walking the other way, leaving the Ministry of Agriculture behind.

Since the election, I have been concerned about the importance of the agriculture community and rural Ontario to this government. First, rural affairs disappeared off the radar screen, only to have its programs reappear under the jurisdiction of the minister responsible for urban infrastructure. Since then the Liberals have marched on with an obvious urban agenda.

This government has consistently diverted dollars from rural to urban Ontario and has set in place programs that benefit large cities over towns and villages. It has not protected rural residents from unfair hydro increases, as they promised. It has broken its promise of transition funding for tobacco farmers. The 2 cents per litre gas tax proposed for municipalities is dedicated to transit, diverting the majority to urban Ontario. With the massive cuts to the agriculture budget, the ministry is no longer able to sustain programs that were invaluable to the farmers of this province, like the municipal outlet drainage program.

In May of this year, the Liberal government saw fit to remove \$128 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget. It was the largest cut to any ministry—over 20% of the ministry's budget. The minister stood in this House and refused to admit that he's at the mercy of his urban colleagues and that he was powerless to stop his portfolio from being ravaged. He has explained away the cuts, but in reality \$128 million is just gone. It has gone to benefit an urban agenda.

I stand today to call upon this government to recognize that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget has been reduced by 20%. When the 20% cut was announced, it was obvious farmers would not enjoy the same support they had from our government. However, I think everyone believed there would be some consultation about priority funding and that stakeholders would at last have real input into their decisions. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. Municipalities and farm organizations were appalled by the lack of consultation. Eighteen hours' notice was given that the Ontario municipal drainage program would be cut. Municipalities were faxed at 7:30 at night to let them know that the program would end at 5 pm the next day. Let's be clear, this is not a program that helps municipalities, but the money will now have to be paid by the farmers directly.

This proves how little the Liberal government understands or cares about the impact its policies are having on

the daily lives of average citizens or how deep is the rift they create between rural and urban Ontario. The Ministry of Agriculture's own communication states that drains "are a vital component of local infrastructure. Without them many areas of the province would be subjected to regular flooding, reduced production from agricultural land and increased public health risks." Yet the program was cut without regard to consequences. It was only after the Premier met with massive negative reaction from farmers and municipalities that even he thought about transition funding and consulting with stakeholders. If he had consulted, he would have known how the few million dollars he was going to save by cutting the program would so drastically affect a farmer's bottom line. I stand today to call upon this government to reinstate full and future funding to this program. Temporary transition funding is not adequate or appropriate.

Then funding for genetic research was cut. The Ontario herd improvement, swine improvement and beef improvement organizations were told they would no longer receive financial support from the government. With no consultation, millions of dollars were lost to these organizations without a word of warning, even though auditor's reports were received stating they were meeting and exceeding the terms of their contracts. Farmers still reeling from the impact of BSE will now have the cost of these essential services added to the price of doing business, or in many cases their losses in doing business.

Finally, I question the rationale behind removing the funds from the DHI, OSI and BIO when they use a portion of the money to provide food safety and traceability programs. The Haines report recommendation 12 states, "I recommend that the provincial government work together with industry and commodity groups as well as the government of Canada and the other provinces to develop a national strategy for traceability." The Liberal government has declared its commitment to begin implementing this report and has publicly stated they will implement every one of the report's recommendations as soon as possible. The minister has called on everyone involved in food safety to make this happen. Well, the DHI, OSI and BIO were doing just that, yet the funding was cut, again without regard to consequences. The minister didn't stop to think that he was cutting funding to an organization which was doing a job that he was asking them to do. I stand today to call upon this government to reinstate full and future funding to do genetic research so that Ontario food quality and safety will continue to excel.

The minister and his staff have explained the \$128-million cut to the Ministry of Agriculture's budget as simply the end of one-time special funding. Minister Peters is on record as saying BSE relief is included in that group. The borders are still closed; the live cattle, beef and dairy farmers are still suffering extreme financial hardship; spin-off industries, processing industries and whole communities are suffering. This is not a situation that needs one-time funding, nor is it a time to

make drastic cuts to safety nets. Yet the minister says BSE is special one-time funding. Sixty-five million dollars of the budget cut came directly from safety nets, and money to cover farmers' needs through the agriculture policy framework dropped dramatically.

There were reasons why I, and our government's agriculture minister after me, did not sign the APF. It was because as it stood it was not a good deal for Ontario, and it's not a good deal for Ontario farmers. During my tenure as minister, I managed to get \$30 million more from the federal government to get Ontario's fair share of the safety net. That also, of course, included \$20 million more from the province to match federal funding. Minister Peters and the Liberal government have bargained that away. During my tenure, Ontario farmers got their cheques. Now when the time comes for the Ontario government to contribute their 40% to BSE compensation, they find themselves behind the eight ball, totally unprepared to administer the program.

Alberta put infrastructure in place as soon as the federal government announced the money. They had the applications ready and waiting, because that government recognized the dire need of its people. The Ontario government was nowhere to be seen. It took massive negative reaction to prod this government into doing what was right, and still they seem to drag their heels.

When a crisis of similar proportion was happening in the pork industry under our administration, we had the cheques to the farmers before the federal money was even produced. We had cheques in their hands within 30 days. I call upon the government to provide BSE funding to Ontario's ruminant industry quickly, as is being done in other provinces.

1550

But the incompetence of the administration of safety net money doesn't stop there. Farmers in this province are waiting for safety net bridge funding that should have been in their pockets a long time ago. We're talking about \$90 million. Forty-five million of the \$90 million was for the 2003 year. Now commodity representatives are saying they don't expect to see that money in 2004, never mind the other \$45 million that should be paid out this year. The Liberal election platform stated, "We believe that the role of the Minister of Agriculture and Food is one of the most important in cabinet. We will make OMAF a lead ministry in a Liberal government."

The developments in agriculture thus far tell me this is simply not true, that this is another Liberal broken promise. The way this government is managing agriculture is just not acceptable. Therefore, I call upon Premier McGuinty and Minister Peters to fulfill their campaign promise to support the farmers of Ontario by reinstating funds to the ministry budget, to the municipal outlet drainage program, to genetic research organizations and to safety nets, and to do this in a competent, efficient manner as soon as possible. I and the farmers of this province would truly like to see Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government make OMAF a lead ministry at the cabinet table, as they promised to do in the

election. I think the people of Ontario deserve nothing less

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I can think of no better time than now to have this debate, because now, one year after the beginning of the McGuinty government, we're in a position where we can compare all of the promises made with all of the promises broken. I think this needs to happen, because the record of promises on the one hand, and then the conduct on the other—the contrast is almost breathtaking. First, I want to concentrate on some of the promises made.

Before and during the election, Mr McGuinty said, "The Harris-Eves government has completely ignored the needs of our province's rural communities. It has downloaded unfair financial burdens on to rural municipalities." Then he went on to say, "We will give rural communities a voice and provide them with stable funding so that they can chart their own course." That was one of the promises made. Then there was, I guess almost contiguous with that, another promise which said that Liberals "will make research work for Ontario farmers." Then there was another promise made, referring to the McGuinty government: "We will consult with the industry. The Harris-Eves government has done little meaningful consultation with farmers on issues that directly affect them. We will listen to Ontario farmers and get their best advice." Those were the promises that were made during the election. Now, one year after, I think it is important to look at what in fact has happened.

Let me deal with the first promise, the promise that said the McGuinty government "will give rural communities a voice and provide them with stable funding so that they can chart their own course." Well, what we have seen happen is that since then the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has lost 20% of its budget, and program after program has been slashed with no consultation. Then there was the promise that the McGuinty government "will make research work for Ontario farmers." Well, there were a number of strategies, a number of initiatives that were carrying on important research, whether it was genetic research or whether it was research in terms of crops, and these have been slashed with no input, no consultation with farmers, none, simply a fax—received, in some cases, in the middle of the night—saying, "As of tomorrow, the funding for this strategy, this initiative or that program is gone."

The promise to consult with the industry is, I think, a most egregious failure. Imagine, when you have established programs within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and farm organizations are contributing partners to those programs and initiatives, and then you receive not a phone call from the minister, not a request for a meeting from the minister, but a fax in the middle of night telling you that the program, the initiative, the strategy that you're a partner in, is terminated unilaterally. This shows, indeed, a unique respect for farmers and farm organizations.

I want to go back to the complaint, the criticism of the former Conservatives that they were downloading. I want to talk, in that context, about the municipal outlet drainage program. This is another one that was literally eliminated: no consultation, no discussion, just a quiet notice to municipalities that were affected that the program was gone.

What does this do to municipalities? Well, I guess if municipalities took the same attitude as the McGuinty government, they could try to say to farmers, "Well, it all falls on you," but municipalities can't do that. Municipalities know that they've got municipal drains, that they've got drainage systems that were established over time using the municipal outlet drainage program, and they have to maintain them and continue them.

So what this is going to mean for municipalities, quite simply, is that municipalities are being hit with another round of downloading. The same downloading that Mr McGuinty used to criticize the Conservatives for, the McGuinty government is now repeating in spades. But you didn't even have the decency to go out and consult with municipalities or farm organizations. You didn't even have the decency to call them and say, "There's an issue here." You simply tried, in the dead of night, to push it down on to municipalities and hope that there would be minimum media coverage of the issue. The Conservatives may have downloaded openly. What we're getting from the McGuinty Liberals is downloading on to rural communities by stealth, downloading by the back door, and the municipal outlet drainage program is an example of exactly that.

Let me just say that this whole issue is penny-wise and pound foolish, because municipalities simply will not have the money to maintain some of these municipal drains and farmers will not have the money to maintain some of these municipal drains, and you are playing with a very serious situation which is probably going to erupt two or three years down the road. It will then cost more money to come in and undo the damage that you've created than you think you may have cut from the budget.

Just to give you an idea of what an unwise decision this really is: The budget of the provincial government is \$77 billion annually. Do you know how much the government wants to take out of this program? Seven million dollars. When you've got a budget of \$77 billion, I think rural municipalities and farmers who have taken part in the municipal outlet drainage program are worth at least \$7 million. How piddly, how penny-pinching and, frankly, how cowardly is the way you tried to do it.

I know the minister, when asked to comment, said that, really, he had no control over this; this was being done by the minions in the Ministry of Finance. If that's true—and I've heard that the minister offered up that rationale—then it says to me that this is a government that really doesn't take agricultural and rural issues very seriously at all.

1600

I want to deal with the issue of research. I want to repeat the promise that was made by the McGuinty

government, that research knowledge needs to be applied to the agricultural industry, that research is important, that the government was going to make research work for farmers.

We have the Ontario swine improvement strategy. The swine improvement strategy, as all farmers know but perhaps other Ontarians don't know, is a not-for-profit, industry-run organization dedicated to providing genetic improvements to swine herds so that farmers get the benefit of some of the increased productivity, some of the improvement in the herd. It is the only organization in Ontario charged with evaluating pigs and the quality of swine herds under the Canadian swine improvement program. A government study conducted by KPMG concluded in June that the swine improvement program was meeting or exceeding the terms of its contracts with the provincial government.

So here you actually had a program that was a success and was being recognized as a success by outside independent evaluators. This was research that was working. And what did you do? You cut it, with no notice, no consultation, no work with farm organizations or farmers. You completely contradicted what you said in the election. You cut a research strategy that outside, independent evaluators said is working and is working very successfully.

Then there's the whole issue of Beef Improvement Ontario, the BIO strategy. Once again, that's an industry-operated organization dedicated to providing genetic and management information services to the beef industry, right from the grower to the packer. This one is particularly hard to understand, because this one occurs in the middle of the BSE crisis, when you've got not only the Americans but other beef-consuming countries that want to know more and more information about your beef herds, that want more and more information about your capacity to not only protect and sustain but improve your beef herds. What does the McGuinty government do? They cut the single most successful strategy. Beef farmers out there across the province—the minister knows this, because even beef farmers in northern Ontario—first of all, were surprised. They were flabbergasted that a government would cut this program, cut this kind of research initiative, in the context of the BSE crisis. Once again, an independent, outside evaluator looked at the BIO program and said that it was, in fact, exceeding the criteria, exceeding the expectations that were set out by the government.

I want to talk just briefly about Ontario dairy herd improvement. Dairy herd improvement lost \$1.4 million, cut by the province—once again, a cut of a research program which was proven to be effective and efficient in terms of what it was doing for Ontario's dairy herds. No consultation, no discussion; just another one of those faxes in the middle of the night: "This program is gone. This money is gone."

I want to refer to the BSE crisis. I was at the international plowing match earlier this fall. In fact, I've been going to the plowing match since about 1993. I

remember some of the tough decisions that Bob Rae made. I remember Bob Rae going to the plowing match. But do you know what? I don't remember Bob Rae being booed. I remember Mike Harris, as much as I detested the agenda of Mike Harris and the Conservatives, going to the plowing match. I remember a lot of criticism of him, but I don't remember Mike Harris being booed. I remember Ernie Eves being at the plowing match a couple of years ago, but I don't remember Ernie Eves being booed.

This year, for the first time in my memory, the Premier of Ontario was booed at the International Plowing Match. Not only that—and the minister knows this—but after a circus of cabinet ministers was brought up on stage to speak, one of the representatives of the International Plowing Match went to the microphone and said that it was the first time in his memory that cabinet ministers came to the International Plowing Match and had nothing to say, no announcement to make for the farm communities of Ontario. You guys are making history over there.

Then we saw the almost-emergency announcement on BSE that happened after the fact. You know, when the Titanic is going down, you run around and rearrange the deck chairs very quickly and put up the podium and say, "We have something to announce." I say to the minister—and I don't bear any malice toward the minister—it looked terrible. It looked like, after the horses had left the barn, after the fire was fully in effect, you suddenly realized there was a problem.

Maybe I can make a hint to the minister here: Sometimes when you don't have enough people in your own caucus supporting your position, that's when you have to start to rely upon opposition members to start to support your position. I say this to Mr Peters with sincerity: I think that's a strategy you're going to have to employ, because it's very clear that with all of your urban colleagues in the cabinet, you don't have much support.

When the news media repeats the story that you didn't know about some of these cuts, that you didn't know they were happening and that in fact the decisions were being made by minions in the Ministry of Finance and your office wasn't being kept informed, that suggests to me that you'd better reach out to some of the opposition members, because you're going to need some allies in the battles that are yet to come.

I just want to go over the BSE crisis once again. I think the minister probably spoke to a lot of farmers at the plowing match. He has probably spoken to a lot of other beef farmers. The minister must know—it doesn't matter if you're from eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, central Ontario, northeastern Ontario or northwestern Ontario—that most beef producers probably have about another five or six months left. Most of them have completely exhausted their own equity, have taken second mortgages on their homes or farms, have arranged lines of credit and exhausted those lines of credit. They're in debt in terms of their suppliers, whether it be for feed or other products. So, in many cases, they're about six months away from losing it.

The minister should also know that it won't just be the actual producers; this will have a ripple effect from the original producers to suppliers and so on in rural communities.

Farmers were very clear about what has to happen. Yes, there has to be some emergency assistance, but they're saying, "Look, it's going to take six, seven, eight years to climb out of this." Their equity has been so exhausted, all their financial means have been so exhausted and they are so far into debt that they're going to need at least seven or eight years to climb out of this. What they're expecting from the minister and from this government and from the Liberals in Ottawa is a strategy of low-interest loans that will allow them to spread this impact over the seven or eight years.

That's going to be the test that the minister faces over the next six months. You're going to have to persuade your cabinet colleagues who want to give physicians a 35% or 36% pay increase that the beef industry in rural Ontario is going to have to have access to low-interest loans if they're going to be able to dig themselves out of the BSE crisis.

1610

I say this to be helpful to the minister. This will be the next test. This will be your test to determine whether or not you're effective. If you can't come up with a strategy of low-interest loans to help farmers spread the burden, to spread the difficulties that they are carrying now over five, six or seven years, then it's going to be over for too many of them.

I actually wish the minister well in terms of persuading some of his urban colleagues in the cabinet that farm issues, rural issues, rural municipal issues have to be taken seriously. But I have to tell you that what's happened with the rural drainage program, what's happened with the BIO program, what's happened with the swine improvement program isn't encouraging.

You didn't consult. You've cut the research. You've cut the budget. In too many cases, the attempt was made to do this in the middle of the night in the hope to duck under the radar screen and under the media screen. It may have succeeded in a couple of instances, but it's not going to succeed in the longer term.

You need some help. You need to start reaching out to some of the opposition members to be your allies in what is already a difficult job and, I predict, will become more difficult.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I appreciate the lectures that I've received from both sides of the House. I think I'll start with the NDP. The NDP is the government that closed two agricultural colleges in this province: closed New Liskeard, closed Centralia. This is the government that cut meat inspectors. They went from 130 meat inspectors to 80 meat inspectors in 1993.

Then, I really appreciate the lecture from the Tories. They talk about the member's commitment to agriculture. I took an opportunity to review Hansard. The member who stands as the critic and the defender of

agriculture spoke to agriculture five times between 1995 and 1998, at a time when the budget was slashed. Judge not lest ye be judged. In 1996-97, \$12.8 million cut from the agriculture budget; in 1997-98, \$31.4 million cut from the agriculture budget; in 1998-99, \$62.8 million cut from the agriculture budget. Where was the great defender of agriculture within his own government? He wasn't there; he was silent. That silence showed that he supported those cuts to agriculture, and that's not appropriate.

We've heard that this budget has been reduced by 20%. Well, \$64 million of this budget was bridge funding that was taken out of the budget; \$26 million related to the ending of the Healthy Futures program, and the government had already announced the ending of the Healthy Futures program; \$41.5 million related to one-time BSE support. To listen to his comments that we've cut the budget—we've had difficult decisions to make. We did have some decisions to make that I know have not been popular, but I chuckle at the former minister and some of his comments.

Let's talk genetics programs. Perhaps the member doesn't remember the letter that he wrote to me. He wrote to me on April 8, 2004, talking about conflicts of interest in the Ontario swine industry. The member sent me a copy of an e-mail dated March 25, talking about the fact that OSI was standing in the way of private sector genetic research. The member wrote to me and said, "I think we all agree government programs should not compete with the free market and should maintain the focus on research for which they were intended." Well, come on. You can't have it both ways, to stand up and be this defender, and yet on April 8, he wrote telling me to cut support for OSI. Very unusual.

The municipal outlet drainage program: Again, I chuckle at this member and where his defence was for this program when it was in place within his own government, because they cut \$1.2 million from the drainage program. You cut it, Ernie. We've met with the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, we've met with countless municipalities and we're working on the development of a new program for the municipal outlets drainage program.

I contest the comments from the leader of the third party, because this was not downloading. We've kept in place the \$1.5 million, paying 50% of the cost of the drainage superintendents. This was a program where the dollars flowed to the farmers. This is one-third funding to the farmers, so I don't necessarily agree with his comment that it was downloading.

But as well, I speak to the other programs we had in place that had to be cut. It was even during the time when Mr Hardeman was the minister. Those three organizations were very well aware that they had to be on the road to self-sufficiency. Actually, that seed was planted by the NDP government. It was the NDP government that started and led those three organizations to move toward self-sufficiency.

I question as well the comments about support for BSE. The previous government and our government

recognized the need, that we had to come to the table in a time of crisis. And we have been there. Over \$92 million in unbudgeted money has flowed to farmers in this province. Part of that \$92 million was \$7 million that we've invested in the increase of slaughter capacity. Because one of the challenges we face in this province is that we can't eat our way out of this crisis. There is one way that every one of you can help, though: Make that conscious decision when you go to the grocery store—not just with beef, but with any product to ask if it's an Ontario product. Ask if it's a Canadian product. That's a way that you can help. Do what I did last night at a restaurant here in Toronto. I asked the waitress, "Are we eating Canadian beef?" Do you know what? Part of the meal was Canadian beef. It wasn't all Canadian beef. So ask that question. That's a way that every one of us can be of some assistance to the farmers of this province, to support agriculture.

We have been there. We've worked toward increasing slaughter capacity in this province, and I think that's extremely important. These are long-term investments, not short-term investments. We're going to make sure, with the additional \$30 million that we have available to us—and I thank Premier McGuinty. Both parties should understand the process that exists of having to go before Management Board and ultimately to cabinet to gain approval. The government was there: the Premier was there with support in the BSE crisis in this province.

That \$30 million a year for the set-aside program: We are working with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to make sure we get this program right. One of the challenges we face with made-in-Ottawa programs is that we don't often have the flexibility to ensure that we can develop a program that best meets the needs of the farmers in a particular province. But we're working with the Cattlemen's Association to ensure that we get it right.

I want to comment as well on some of the issues that were raised, and I know some of my colleagues are going to raise this as well. The former Minister of Agriculture, Mr Hardeman, again talks about his commitment and that we need to make sure we have people on the ground. Who is the minister who put the final nail in the coffin of the agricultural offices in this province? Ernie Hardeman. In December 1999, with a stroke of the pen, the Ag offices were closed in this province.

I hear as well the temporary leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition say we're going the close rural schools and rural church halls etc. Well, where was that honourable member when regulation 170 went before the cabinet? Where were the members of the rural caucus on the other side when regulation 170 went before cabinet? Non-existent. You didn't speak up and say anything in that regard.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): We were speaking.

Hon Mr Peters: You may have been speaking, but nobody was listening. We're listening. The Minister of the Environment has made the commitment that we're going to find a way to fix regulation 170. You didn't do

it. We heard the member from Lanark-Carleton earlier in the year introduce legislation that we need to stop the assessment of maple syrup operations as industrial operations.

Interjection: What did we do?

Hon Mr Peters: We fixed it. Who started it? The Tories started it. The Tories started that problem, and we cleaned it up. We made that commitment to the maple syrup producers in this province. We've cleaned it up. We're moving forward on regulation 170. We're cleaning it up.

1620

I heard the member talk about not signing the agricultural policy framework. Well, perhaps the member should pick up the phone and call John Gillespie from the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council, because we met extensively with the Agricultural Commodity Council before this province signed the agricultural policy framework to make sure we would get it right, to make sure this was going to be a deal that would best benefit the farmers of Ontario.

We heard a question today, a concern about the CAIS program. We were able to include in the signing of the APF an annual review of the CAIS program to address some of the concerns the honourable member raised. We heard from the cattle industry that negative margins had to be included in the signing of the APF. We were able to negotiate with the federal government and have negative margins included in the APF.

The APF, over a five-year period, is going to bring \$1.7 billion into this province to support the farmers of Ontario, and we're there with our share to support those farmers. We're also there to ensure that we are there supporting rural Ontario. I challenge the comments that were made on the other side. As the Premier pointed out earlier today, we have been there supporting rural Ontario through education and other initiatives.

Thank you very much for this note. The NDP, from 1990 to 1995: a 28% cut to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget, \$132 million. So, combined, over \$100 million from the Tories and \$132 million from this government is \$230 million. We've had to find approximately \$10 million in savings. We're cleaning up a mess that was started with the NDP and accelerated with the Tories. These comments that we're not committed to supporting agriculture—I chuckle at the other side, and I can't use some of the words.

We've had the chicken farmers here today. This government demonstrated its clear commitment to the chicken farmers, to the whole supply managed sector. We had a representative in Geneva. We were there defending the interest of supply management in this province, to ensure that message got through. We were there, and we will continue to be there for the supply managed sector.

I heard a member earlier talk about tobacco. Tobacco is a challenge. We all know the harmful health effects of tobacco. Nobody's denying that. Even though some members say that second-hand smoke is not an issue, we know that second-hand smoke is an issue.

We have been left with a major fiscal mess, but we made a commitment to work with the farmers and those communities to help them transition to alternative crops, and we're going to honour that commitment. It may not be as quick as everyone would like. There are a lot of things we would like to have done right when we took office, but we weren't able to. But we are going to be there to help the tobacco farmers in this province. We're going to be there to help those communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, many of you don't realize that, yes, tobacco is a health issue—we're not denying that—but 96% of all the tobacco grown in Canada comes from five counties. Yes, it is an economic issue in those counties, and we're conscious of that. We're going to help those farmers in those communities make that transition.

We're not laughing at the farmers of this province. I laughed at your government or the previous government and what you did to the farmers of this province. Farmers need to be treated with respect, and we're going to do that. There are always going to be challenges, but we are going to work with the agricultural community. We can all do something.

The agricultural community is not a significant part of our population, but it is an important part of our population: 650,000 jobs; \$30 billion a year to the economy of this province; \$8.5 billion in exports; 40% of the food processing in all of Canada is here in the province of Ontario. The automotive industry may be the industry that drives the economy of this province, but it's agriculture that feeds it, and we need to be conscious of that.

So I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, and those of you at home who are watching, to make that conscious decision when go to a grocery store: Make sure you are there to support farmers. You can send that message by buying local, by buying Ontario, by buying Canadian.

We know that agriculture can play a role as we move forward on our health care initiative, on our education initiative. You just heard the minister talk about getting junk food out of the schools. One of the examples he cited was the great initiative of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. We already know the apple producers in Ontario are supporting school apple programs here in Toronto. We can do more. We need to build partnerships. We need to get ourselves out of silos as ministries. We need to get ourselves out of silos in what we do in partnership with the industry. We need to work together, and we're going to work together.

There are some difficult decisions, and one of those decisions is that we will not support this resolution. That's not a message, because I can't believe this member would put that resolution on the floor knowing the damage he and his government did to agriculture.

I want to conclude with what the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said in December 1999, while Ernie Hardeman was the Minister of Agriculture, while the Ministry of Agriculture had already been inflicted with over \$100 million in cuts. This is Jack Wilkinson: "The government is 'gutting' a system that has served us so

well for so many years in many parts of the province. For many farmers, this is nothing more than a further erosion of ministry services in their communities."

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton, I can't hear it either. If you'd be quiet, it would help.

Hon Mr Peters: Don't talk about commitment to agriculture. Don't be judging when you can't judge yourselves. Look at yourselves in the mirror. And you the new members, ask what your government did to the Ministry of Agriculture. You were not friends of farmers. We are friends of farmers. We're going to work with the agricultural community, and we're going to make sure that everybody works with the agricultural community.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I think we're having this opposition day because rural Ontarians are being treated as second-class citizens by this Liberal government and we've had enough of it. We're standing up for them right now, for the farmers.

Interjection.

Ms Scott: You are. Did you consult the people of Ontario, the municipalities?

Interjection.

Ms Scott: It's 2004, Steve.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Ms Scott: It's 2004. I just want to know what municipality you consulted with before you cut the municipal outlet drainage program. Did you consult with anybody? Did you say it was OK? We're asking for it to be immediately restored. That's the problem. You're hurting farmers at the worst time. You're hurting municipalities.

I spoke today about the CAIS cheques and why they're not flowing. They need to flow right away. They're not flowing fast enough and there could be even further delays, adding months on to the programs.

In the platform, you said "We will guarantee a strong Ministry of Agriculture and Food."

Interjection.

Ms Scott: As my friend from Nepean-Carleton said, what other minister is here? What value do you place on rural Ontario at the cabinet table? You've done nothing but hurt rural Ontario. I was not elected in those previous years, but I have lived in my riding all my life. I have not heard such an uproar as exists today in agriculture on the government supports that are available to them. David Windrem, a farmer, has phoned—I thank the Minister of Agriculture for offering to help the farmers in my riding who need their CAIS cheques flowing—and has contacted my office, and he still has not received a cheque.

I cannot emphasize enough the crisis that exists in rural Ontario. They are humble people. They want to stay in business, small business. They're closing their doors. They don't want to ask for money unless it's necessary. They're in a dire crisis. They need the cheques, and they need the cheques now. The reasonable time—it needs to be now. I can't emphasize that enough. The minister has been helpful, but we need to get the cheques out the door now. Six months is too long a wait. Farmers are reasonable, and that's just too long to wait.

1630

In addition to those two things I mentioned, what about the increased taxes, the increased hydro rates, the increased red tape while delivering all of this? You're hurting rural Ontario. When you say you're all for rural Ontario, why did you cut the Leslie M. Frost Centre with one week's notice? Why did you close those doors? You didn't consult with anybody.

Look at the local hospital boards. They're not supplying enough money to the rural hospitals. Your integrated health networks—we're put in with Scarborough. What do we have in relation to Scarborough? Our voice won't be heard in rural Ontario on our hospital boards. That's just it.

We have so many members today who want to speak to this motion. I was very disappointed when the minister said his government would not support this motion. I ask everyone here—

Interjection: They won't support the motion?

Ms Scott: They won't support the motion. I want all the rural members to be in this House and put it on record that you're not supporting the wishes of rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I'll let you folks sort it out, but the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound got up first.

Mr Murdoch: I'm sorry. I didn't see you down there. She can go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thank you to the member.

As I was listening to the member from Oxford, I had a really difficult time. Something very unparliamentary passed through my mind. As a farmer, I can recall the impact of the cuts that we experienced under the Tory government.

They cite things such as drainage. But we heard from our constituents and we listened. I can't say the same thing happened when the OMAF offices were closed. There was no consultation. Farmers lined up at your doors. The 40 offices remained closed. There was no way we could get them to open up again. There was no consultation for it, and nobody heard the farmers.

Until then, a farmer could go to a local OMAF office and talk to a specialist about their particular problems and get an answer. After that, farmers had to take fax sheets and a 1-800 number in order to talk to anybody. Gone was the opportunity to talk face to face with specialists such as Pete Johnson. Gone was the opportunity to have someone come out and do a field visit. Gone was the opportunity for the community and the farm organizations to have the support that they had in the past. Federations of agriculture, 4-H, community organizations all lost opportunities and support. Suddenly there was a scramble by these organizations to find something as simple as a meeting room.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, the member for Simcoe North, please.

Mrs Van Bommel: They couldn't find anything that would help them to come together, and in the past the OMAF offices had provided that as well. So we lost our specialists at the local level. We lost our meeting rooms. We lost our support for events in the community.

That government, in the last few days, keeps telling me how they're the friend of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Well, I can tell you that I was a member services representative for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I was that way before I came here, and they were no friend of OFA at that time.

When the OMAF offices were closed, suddenly the member services representatives for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture started getting calls that used to go to OMAF. Farmers wanted to talk to somebody. They didn't want to just get a 1-800 number. They didn't want to just get a fax sheet or something on-line. We were making calls on farmers who weren't even members, but we had to do that because that was the obligation we had to our communities and to our industry.

I can remember one call I got. The general public started to use the Ontario Federation of Agriculture member services representatives. I got a call from someone who asked me where they could buy the cheapest gardening tools. It had nothing to do with us in agriculture, nothing to do with us in the federation, but people no longer had somewhere to turn because the OMAF offices were closed; they were gone.

I have to commend my colleagues at the OFA.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): You're in government now. You're not opposition.

Mrs Van Bommel: I don't care. I know what it was like. I lived it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member please take her seat. Heckling's not allowed, but it is tolerated. But when it's simply yelled out, it becomes rather annoying. Please, keep that in mind.

Mrs Van Bommel: I just want to say that I want to commend the member services representatives for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, because they jumped into the gap when all the OMAF offices were closed, and they have done so continually without any real support from that government.

We want to talk about downloading, and that came from the Tory government as well. They downloaded the farm rebate tax program on the municipalities. No longer were farmers able to get their rebate from the government. They had to rely on the municipalities. When they did that, they also changed the regulations and created an absolute disaster out there in terms of classification of farmland. Suddenly farmers had to apply every year to have their farm registered as farmland. No longer were they able to simply continue until there was a change in their enterprise.

A lot of farmers did not understand the process. There was very poor communication about how that was done.

Suddenly farmers were finding that at the end of the year, in September and October, they had lost their classification. Instead of being able to pay 25% of the property tax rate, they suddenly had to pay 100%. But what they found out was that there was no appeal any more. The appeal date had been back at the end of March and they had completely missed it. No one had contacted them to tell them that their classifications had changed. They just simply ended up paying 100%—no appeal mechanism whatsoever.

It became a real problem for farmers who were purchasing farmland. When you purchased farmland, it automatically flipped back to residential. If you did it at the wrong time of year, you had no opportunity to appeal it. You had no opportunity to bring it back to farmland classification. You simply paid the 100% residential rate, and you had to bear that for a year. That cost most farmers thousands and thousands of dollars.

The Tory government didn't exactly have a stellar history in terms of agriculture. In the early 1980s—and I hear members talking about how terrible it is out there for farmers right now with the financial crisis they're facing. I know that very well; I went through that in the early 1980s. That was at the time between 1980 and 1985 when the Tories did nothing to help farmers—absolutely nothing. It was the worst financial crisis in farm history since the Depression and they did nothing.

Farmers were forced off their farms. Some had to declare bankruptcy. They devastated rural communities. The impact on small business in our community was immeasurable. Some of those farmers were able to recover, but for others it struck a blow that left them in a position where they never returned to agriculture, they were so completely devastated.

It left a permanent mark on all of us. It's something we will never forget. Our families and our neighbours watched us go through it, and they were helpless to do anything about it. They told us that we were bad managers. There was no emergency funding for us at the time. There was nothing similar to the BSE program. Some of us, like I said, went through this. We survived it; others didn't.

I think our government is doing everything it can to help farmers through this crisis. We recognize it. Like I said, I know very well and I'm not going to allow anyone to forget it—not in this assembly, not ever.

1640

Mr Murdoch: The first thing we've got to do is put this whole debate in perspective. We're the opposition; you're the government. It's an opposition day. You people have to learn that. You keep saying "the government." Yes, we were, and yes, we made mistakes. We're not the government anymore. Get that through your heads. You've been here a year, and you haven't figured out that you're the government. What is wrong with you guys? This is the whole thing that's wrong with this. You guys are the government.

I'm not out to get the Minister of Agriculture. I think he's got a difficult job and he's trying to do some things.

Actually, Ted Arnott and I had a really good question today and we didn't get it on. We were going to ask for all consent, but we didn't do it. The program you have for our calves: Are we going to keep them till Christmas or not? We can't wait till then, Mr Minister. You're going to have to get up—we need that money now. Guys are feeding their calves now. The sales are on in my area—in Keady every Tuesday. It's going on in Wiarton; there are four sales up in Wiarton. We need to know whether we're going to get that money for our calves, or are we going to feed them over the winter. It can't wait till Christmas. It has to be done now. That was the question we had. I'm sorry we didn't get it on, Minister, but I need you to look into that and I don't need you to tell me it's going to be around Christmas. It won't work.

Let's get back to what we're debating here. I'm sorry, I had to bring that in or we wouldn't get it on. We're debating about agriculture and rural Ontario. That's why we're here today and we're the opposition. You can keep coming back and saying, "You guys didn't do this," and, "You didn't do that." Well, we're over here. Now we're trying to tell you that if you don't start doing some of these things, you'll be back over here next time. This is where you're going to end up if you don't start listening to us.

I don't agree a lot with the leader of the NDP, but he you told you that you're going to have to start working with us. This is what this was all about. Your leader said, "We're going to work with everybody." He has not done that. You guys are just following him around like collie dogs. That's what we call you in the country. You're told to sit over there. You're told to come, and you come. You're not out there arguing. Where were our rural and northern members when they closed the Frost Centre? Not one word was said. You could have come out. Just because the Premier's office says that you're going to do this or you're going to do that—you guys from northern and rural Ontario can speak out. You can get up and say, "No, this isn't right." You can tell the people of Ontario this isn't right.

No consultation on the drainage. That was another one. I don't know what happened, Mr Minister. I know you work for us, but what happened there? All of a sudden you just closed that down, and then nobody said anything. Where are the rural members? Say something, for God's sake. Get up and say, "This is wrong," because you're not always right and you're not always going to be right over there. If you don't start listening to the opposition sometimes, you'll be sitting over here before you know what happened. Three years come pretty quick. You can make your mistakes like we did. We certainly made some. But there's no sense telling us about it when we're trying to tell you.

This is opposition day; it is not a government day. It's opposition day, and we're trying to tell you some of the things you made wrong. I'm worried. Where are the rural and northern members over there? Don't become collie dogs. Don't follow the leader's office all the time. They're not always right.

Mr Hardeman: No, they're never right.

Mr Murdoch: Somebody said "never right." The odd time they might be right. I want to tell you, you've got to start sticking up for your ridings or you won't be here. If you don't start sticking up for your ridings, then you're going to lose, because it's your ridings that are suffering. Remember that.

This is what bothers me. Another one of your Premier's promises—you guys didn't make all those promises; they came out of the Premier's office—was that we were going to change the system here, that we were going to be allowed to speak out when it affects our riding. But you haven't been allowed to do that, or you would have said something about that. Somebody would have got upset about the Frost Centre. Nobody got upset about it. Somebody would have got upset about the drains. Somebody would have said, "That's not right. You just can't do that without bringing it forward to the OFA and people like that who need to know." Another one was—I'm going to get the hook in a minute because we have so many people who want to talk on this, and that's OK.

The gas tax is another one. Where's rural? Where are you out there? The big cities are going to grab all of this. We all pay our taxes. We all pay for that gas, and you're going to give it all to the big cities. Rural Ontario and northern Ontario are going to get none of that. So come on there in rural Ontario, wake up and start pounding. Somebody start telling them, "You're not going to do that." You let the bully out, the big bully in the health thing, but you guys aren't telling anybody anything. So start waking up over there. Start speaking out for your ridings and quit this partisan politics, because it won't work.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to bring a bit of a different perspective to this debate, as one who represents a part of the province, northern Ontario, that has an agricultural community that is pretty distinct and different. As my good friend from Sudbury would know, the challenges faced by people in the agricultural industry of northern Ontario—Earlton, Timmins, Sudbury or wherever it might be—are quite different.

I want to bring forward to this debate some of the issues that a number of people have raised with me in the agricultural community and in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, but also in the Timiskaming riding.

I have great fortune. The agriculture critic for the federal NDP shares an office with me, so we get to talk about this quite a bit. Charlie Angus, who a number of you know was elected to the federal House this past election, is our federal agriculture critic. He's really at his wits' end about some of the issues and difficulties that are facing the northern communities.

The first thing I want to put straight out is that we can all agree that what has happened in the beef industry regarding the BSE situation has been absolutely tragic. Similarly, we're seeing the same kinds of things happen in other parts of the industry as far as we can see.

One of the things I think we need to figure out how to deal with is—and it's partly provincial, but a big part of

it is federal, and I ask this question as a layperson on the agricultural side—when I walk into the store and buy a piece of beef, why do I still pay the price that I do when I know my farming friends are getting a heck of a lot fewer dollars per pound when they're selling the beef to the abattoirs? What the heck is going on?

The beef farmers are telling me they're basically starving. They're having to sell meat on the hoof for far less than it's costing them to buy the beef, raise it and do what they need to do to bring it to market. Yet when the average consumer goes into the store to buy their beef, they're paying virtually the same price, if not more, than they were paying prior to the time the whole BSE thing came out.

I think there's something going on between the price the farmer is getting for the sale of his or her cattle and what we're having to pay when we get to the store. All I know is that I'm paying, but the people who are producing the beef are getting the short end of the stick. That is having a tragic effect on farms in northern Ontario, because, as you know, there is a very lively beef industry in northern Ontario. In some cases they're part-time and have to work somewhere else to make ends meet, and in some cases they're full-time, but in both those scenarios, they're really having a tough time trying to make ends meet, and they're saying that something has to be done.

I can't throw this all at the feet of this government. It wouldn't be fair, because partly it is what's happening within the industry. I think government has to figure out, at both the federal and provincial levels, what we need to do to make sure that the price we pay at the counter fairly reflects the price the farmer should get as he or she sells their cattle to market. It seems to me we have to do something.

I know my right-wing friends—I admit I have an ideology; I am on the left—say, "It's market economics, and we should not intervene in any way, shape or form. Market conditions determine that this is the price the farmers are going to get when they sell their beef and this is the price you're going to pay when you buy the product." I just say that I support that in most cases. A market economy is by far a better way of doing things than having government intervention in everything. Even though I'm a social democrat at heart, I also believe there is room for a market economy within social democracy. But I think there is a role for government to play when things have gone awry.

I ask the minister across the way—I know he has taken up his time in his debate, and I think that according to the rules he can actually—no, because it's not a real debate: You can't actually come back at the end. But it would be interesting to get your parliamentary assistant or somebody else to report to us in this House what you're prepared to do with your own powers as a provincial government and what we can do collectively as a Legislature to convince our federal counterparts to deal with that issue. It is a tragic issue.

Why should a beef farmer, he and she and the family, who works hard to run that business find themselves in a

situation of selling beef at an unreasonable rate that doesn't even reflect what they're paying for their investment, and people walk into the supermarket or meat shop and pay far more than it's worth?

In fairness to the supermarket and the meat shop, it ain't them either. Let's get real. It isn't, for the most part, the person who owns the individual meat shop in a community who is to blame. It's the people in between, and we need to find a way to get at that.

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I think there's something really wrong in a system that allows that to happen. We all agree that people should be allowed to make a reasonable return on their investment, be it a farm, be it an abattoir, be it distribution or sale, but what is reasonable? Obviously, somebody is making far more money than I think they're entitled to make.

Justement, j'avais l'opportunité de parler à un agriculteur dans la région de Kapuskasing. Ça fait deux ou trois semaines qu'on parlait exactement de cette situation. Le monsieur et la madame se trouvent dans une situation où cette famille, la deuxième génération au nord de l'Ontario, va perdre leur terre agricole.

Ce monsieur et cette madame, assez âgés, qui doivent avoir plus de 70 ans à ce point-ci, se trouvent dans une situation où leurs garçons et une des filles, qui est mariée et qui reste encore dans la région avec son mari, veulent continuer la tradition de la famille pour être capables de rester dans l'industrie elle-même. C'est quelque chose qu'ils aiment beaucoup faire. C'est une passion pour eux de travailler dans cette industrie qu'ils aiment. C'est le seul emploi où on sait qu'on peut se réveiller un matin pour travailler avec les banques, et la prochaine journée avec des outils. On est avec la terre. On fait tout. C'est un des emplois les plus complets dans cette province.

Si on pense que pour quelqu'un qui est responsable de la terre, comme un agriculteur, c'est un job qui est facile et simple, on a besoin de revisiter ses opinions. Comme le ministre le sait bien, c'est un ouvrage qui est très complexe. Il faut avoir une connaissance de la matière dans l'industrie elle-même et on a besoin de connaître la mécanique. On a besoin de connaître tout le domaine agricole. On a besoin de connaître le système de finances et le système de distribution. Il y a beaucoup à savoir dans cette industrie, et c'est une passion avec certains de demeurer dans cette industrie.

Le monsieur et la madame dont on a parlé, justement, et je ne vais pas utiliser leur nom—bien, on va l'utiliser : M. et M^{me} Génier. Eux autres sont à un point où ils disaient, « Écoute, on est au point où on ne peut plus rester dans l'industrie. Il nous a fallu vendre nos troupeaux parce que, franchement, on ne peut plus faire de l'argent avec ce bœuf. » Ils sont dans une situation où, s'il n'y a pas de revenus qui rentrent, c'est bien simple, hein? S'il n'y a pas de revenu à la fin de la journée, même si les terres nous appartiennent puis on n'a pas d'hypothèque contre nos terres, il faut payer le fardeau de ce business à un point.

Maman et papa disent, « Écoute, on ne pourra plus continuer », et là ils se trouvent dans une situation de

vendre le terrain. Le problème est que, quand on vend le terrain, le prix qu'on va rechercher ne reflète pas la réalité de ce qu'on a payé et l'investissement qu'on a fait pour toutes ces années dans cette terre. J'ai bien peur que, avec le temps, on voie de moins en moins de personnes dans l'industrie agricole au nord de l'Ontario. Je pense que c'est quelque chose qui va complètement dans la méchante direction, telle qu'on voit au sud de l'Ontario.

The other issue that was raised—again, I was talking to my good friend Tony Martin, whom many of you would know here, who was in this Legislature about a year ago and who was recently elected to the federal House. I was talking to Mr Martin, I guess, about two or three weeks ago; we were having a bit of a chat, reminiscing and finding out how things are there.

I just want to say he's very happy with the arrangements in Ottawa, compared to Ontario. I've got to say they're much more generous on the Hill than they are here at Queen's Park. Dalton McGuinty is a piker when it comes to comparing him to the wages, benefits and pensions of one Paul Martin, let me tell you, along with myself and any other member of this Assembly.

But he was telling me he was really taken aback when he, along with Charlie Angus, our federal member from Timmins-James Bay, attended a meeting with a number of people in the Sault Ste Marie area who are in the agricultural industry. He said he was really taken aback and floored by the degree to which they were angry with the provincial Liberals who we know, because I know, during the last term that the Conservatives were in power, had the opportunity to go to the plowing match and attend a number of different events in the agricultural community. The Liberals courted quite successfully, I would say, the agricultural community of Ontario, to the chagrin of the Tories. I was trying to do the same, just so you guys know. I wasn't going there on your behalf, but I've got to say I was really taken aback, because I know the response I was getting from people in the agricultural industry in Timiskaming, Timmins-James Bay, Algoma and other ridings across northern Ontario.

Of course, the Tories held a certain core of those particular individuals, but a number of people moved over and voted Liberal, and they were really upset, from what both Tony and Charlie were telling me.

Do you know what the issue was? Tile drainage. That was the thing that set them completely off. They were saying that for us in northern Ontario, the cost of being able to deal with tile drainage, as it is being proposed by way of what this government has done, is really going to bankrupt some of them. They will not be able to stay open. They were just at their wits' end.

I was expecting two federal members to go to this meeting and come back and tell me about how they were dealing on the federal side. What they were telling me was that, yes, there are things that Charlie is working on federally, but he was really taken aback, along with Tony, by the degree that people were upset with this government. They were saying, "Listen, they promised a

whole bunch of things that would be done for the agricultural community and they have not been done. We feel that basically we've been sold a bag of goods." They were really looking for some way to express their displeasure and were doing so at that particular meeting. It took me a bit aback, because I really didn't expect that from the agricultural community.

I've got to say—and I don't mean this in any other way than it really is going to come out—people in the agricultural industry are pretty straight shooters. They don't really get caught up in politics to the degree that people do in other areas. They've got better things to do. They've got to run farms. In the morning, they've got to get up; the cows have got to be milked, the chickens have to be taken care of. Whatever you've got to do has to be done. Mother Nature doesn't wait for you. So people don't have time to play around with silly political games. But what was really surprising was the degree that that was happening.

I said, "I'm just going to check things out and call a couple of my friends in the agricultural community with whom I've been dealing over the years," who may not necessarily vote NDP; some of them do but some of them don't. I talked to a number of people who are prominent in the agricultural industry in my part of the province, and it was the same resentment. They were saying "Gilles, it's a good thing you called me, because I was about to call you." We need to do something about that, and we have been working toward those aims. I've just got to say to the government members, you'd better be careful because there's a group of people out there who are not very happy with you.

My good friend Mr Bartolucci was here just a second ago and is probably watching this debate on TV in the back. I have to say, one of the things we have to deal with in the north is this whole issue of access to dollars when it comes to capital in the marketplace, when it comes to not only farmers but all those people in northern Ontario who are entrepreneurs and are trying to get projects off the ground. The difficulty we have now in northern Ontario is not the lack of ideas, it's not the lack of resources, it's not the lack of skills, it's not the lack of opportunity—all of those things exist. It's all there in northern Ontario. But the difficulty in agriculture, as in other parts and industries of the northern Ontario economy, is the whole issue of getting access to dollars, getting access to capital. There is a very small pool of people you can go to in northern Ontario who have the dollars to back up your project if you are trying to raise money to get a project up and running in northern Ontario. You're really in competition with a number of people trying to go after the same people and their dollars to invest in your enterprise.

When you go to the bank, the banks, quite frankly, have made it very clear that unless you've got a rock-solid application for a business loan, they will not touch you. The banks in this province have said, "We are basically trying to stay away from the northern Ontario business part of our portfolio. We're trying to get it

down. We want to deal with an economy that's hot," and where they know they have a better chance of making dollars, and in their minds—I think that's wrong; they're very wrong-minded—it's in southern Ontario. Not that the south doesn't need to have access to capital, but we in the north sure would like to do some of the same.

My point, to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, is that we need to finally do what this government said it was going to do—and I supported it in the last election because it was part of our platform—and that is to move the northern Ontario heritage fund over to what it should do, what it was designed to do and should only do, and that is to lend money or do loan guarantees to businesses in northern Ontario. The heritage fund should in no way, shape or form be into capital infrastructure. I thought it was wrong for the Harris government to have made those changes. I said so to the government when they were there. They had their particular views. They tried it and it didn't work. I'm just saying to this government that that's got to change because, quite frankly, there is going to be a bigger problem in northern Ontario as we move forward.

For example, we know that in the lumber industry, the wood basket is getting tighter and tighter. As time goes on, forestry operations are having a more difficult time to keep their mills filled with lumber. As a result, one of the amendments this government is putting forward in Bill 106 is going to make it that eventually, I predict within about a year or two, we're going to start seeing sawmills in northern Ontario closed and moving their wood into larger supermills in parts of northern Ontario. So communities like Kirkland Lake, White River, Dubreuilville and others that are now having a difficult time will be put in very tough shape.

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I think that before we allow those things to happen, which is a debate for another time, more specific to this motion today, we need to be able to deal with the issue of supporting entrepreneurs that are looking at ways of diversifying the northern Ontario economy. One of the ways you do that is to support the agricultural community, because there are all kinds of opportunities for agriculture.

For example, what is the possibility of somebody saying, "Listen, we want to get into the distribution of meats in northern Ontario," that some entrepreneur could be financed to get into the business of collecting meats that are grown in northern Ontario and sent for slaughter and distributed from northern Ontario? There is no reason why something like that couldn't be done. There is opportunity for expansion in the agricultural industry of northern Ontario. If we had the money, maybe we could look at doing some of that more effectively.

What about the whole issue of being able to look at the food industry and see if there are any possibilities in that industry to take some of the products that we produce in northern Ontario and put them into the food chain by way of some types of facilities in northern Ontario? There's the whole issue of being able to add

value to what we do. It makes no sense to me that we have to take all of our products from northern Ontario all the time and send them somewhere in southern Ontario to transform them into whatever, either food products or whatever it might be. If the heritage fund was there to do what it was originally intended to do, I think there would be a much better chance for that to happen.

L'autre question, c'est l'opportunité d'avoir des politiques en Ontario qui pourraient aider ceux qui regardent des opportunités dans l'industrie agricole qui ne sont pas les industries qu'on a d'habitude. Par exemple, on a eu une expérience à Opasatika, un village au nord de Kapuskasing, où on a essayé, il y a une couple d'années, peut-être trois ou quatre ans, de commencer une industrie de champignons. Ils ont investi beaucoup d'argent local pour être capables de bâtir cet édifice et pour récolter les champignons qui sont produits à l'intérieur de la facilité. Ils ont eu des problèmes, des problèmes qui, finalement, ont causé sa fermeture. On n'a pas en Ontario l'assistance à ceux dans l'industrie agricole pour les aider avec le marketing de leurs produits à travers le nord et même pour avoir accès aux marchés hors le nord de l'Ontario, soit dans le sud ou autres endroits canadiens, ou même dans les États-Unis.

Ils étaient parmi les producteurs des meilleurs champignons qu'on aurait pu produire dans une telle industrie. Ils avaient un produit de qualité. Un problème pour eux—autres c'était, comme j'ai dit un peu plus tôt, le problème de capital. Ils se sont trouvés, dès le début du projet, toujours dans une situation de ne pas avoir assez d'argent pour être capables d'opérer leur plant et de survivre les hauts et les bas, les cycles qu'on trouve dans cette industrie. Mais il y a aussi toute la question de dire, « On a besoin de soutenir et d'aider ces entrepreneurs afin de développer le marché », de dire, « Est-ce qu'on pourrait mieux fournir les marchés du nord de l'Ontario avec des produits qui sont produits à Opasatika? Est-ce qu'on est capables de prendre ce produit et en trouver un marché, même hors le nord de l'Ontario, pour s'assurer qu'il y a un marché qui va survivre et qui va être capable de supporter cette industrie? »

C'est intéressant à noter que le père Noël—pas le Père Noël, Santa Claus, mais le père Noël d'Opasatika—travaille maintenant un an et demi avec la communauté et avec les personnes dans la communauté, des volontaires, pour faire rebondir cette industrie. Le père Noël a pris en main ce projet qui essaie de faire repartir cette facilité pour le bénéfice du monde d'Opasatika, pour donner une opportunité aux gens de la région de trouver de l'ouvrage et pour donner la fierté qui vient avec ça à la communauté. On les souhaite, les bons et les biens, être capables d'avancer, mais quand je parle à M. le père Noël et autres, une des affaires avec lesquelles ils sont préoccupés, c'est la question de développer le marché et d'avoir le financement nécessaire afin d'aller en avant avec leur entreprise.

A couple of other things I just want to say before my time runs out, and that's the whole issue of making sure that we have policies in this province to support those

people in the agricultural industry. It is really important—and I give the minister some credit because I know the minister. He's been here for a couple of terms now. He's a hard-working person who cares about the industry, who cares about his ministry. I don't take that away from him for two seconds. I recognize he's got a heck of a hill to climb because I'm not convinced his cabinet colleagues give him the kind of support he needs. The reality is, you've got a minister who's trying to do the right thing, but I'm not convinced the Premier's office and other people around him are giving him the support he needs, frankly.

We need to recognize that the agricultural industry is one of the key industries of this province, as the minister well knows and is basically, I know on numbers of occasions, trying to educate people in his own group. Some of his cabinet colleagues have to understand that we have to take this industry much more seriously, because there are some very serious problems coming down with water regulations, tile drainage and a whole bunch of other things that are, quite frankly, going to be very troubling. If there's anything I can do—and certainly those people in the industry can—to assist the minister to lobby P and P—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): We're here to help.

Mr Bisson: I'm dead serious. We are there to help—dead serious.

Listen, all kidding aside, I'm trying to make this very non-partisan. I'm saying we are all here for but one reason: We were elected by the people who voted for us in our ridings to come here and represent them. They expect us—

Mr Baird: Some of us were appointed.

Mr Bisson: Some were appointed. Oh, yes, you're right. We're not going to go there.

Mr Baird: Brad Duguid.

Mr Bisson: Yes. We're not going to go there.

The point I make is that we're all elected to come here to represent our constituencies, and we've got to do what we can to assist those people in our ridings to do their jobs. I'm just saying, in all seriousness, if there's anything we can do to assist to put more pressure on the Premier, to help organize the agricultural community in some kind of way—I know it's difficult for you as minister to do that because you can't be seen as organizing protests outside Queen's Park, but we'd be glad to do that for you if you think it's going to help.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I'm dead serious, because that's how democracy works.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Move your car.

Mr Bisson: I've got to tell you the story. Do you know why that car was there? Insurance rates in this province went up to the rate that I could not afford to reinsure it last spring, and I had challenged the Premier of Ontario to the following: Once he puts in public auto, I will move that car.

It is rumoured that the Premier of Ontario climbed a tree late one night with a chainsaw and cut the branch just enough so that the tree was sitting there with just enough weight to fall. That tree was felled and fell on my car and broke it. I've got to say, it's a shameful way for the Premier to deal with the bad public policy of not going to public auto insurance. You'll be glad to know the car is being towed tomorrow.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Listen, guys, if you can't laugh at yourself in this business, you can't laugh at anybody else.

I just want to close again on a very serious point, and that is, this industry is in a lot of trouble. There's just no other way of putting it. There are families that are basically staring down the creditors at the door. They're having a heck of a time trying to stay afloat—afloat, I should say, and some of them afloat. We need to do everything we can to try to support the industry in some way to assist them.

I have to say again to the Minister of Agriculture, anything we can do to help you convince your cabinet colleagues to be more supportive of your call to do things, we'd be more than glad to help you along.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure, coming from a rural riding, to speak on this opposition bill.

Let me say that while I was listening to the member of the third party asking the minister to consider getting allies from the other two parties in opposition, I can reassure you that as a member of this caucus from a rural constituency, indeed all our constituencies are committed to working with the minister to bring folks in the farming community in this province as much as we can.

Just to indicate to you, it's not just agriculture when we talk about rural Ontario; we need to look at the bigger picture: the \$31 million for keeping small rural schools open, which were on the verge of being closed by school boards—

Mr Baird: How's the hospital in Campbellford doing, Lou?

Mr Rinaldi: It's doing just fine. They're doing fine.

Mr Baird: It's not doing fine. They're closing 13 beds.

Mr Rinaldi: There's the \$30 million for BSE that we came to the rescue with when it was needed, and the funding for the school bus transportation in rural Ontario to help those kids get to school. We're committed to rural Ontario.

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Let me talk a little bit about cuts. When we talk about budget cuts that the member wants us to restore, I can speak from personal experience. In my riding, which was held by a member of the now opposition, he made a commitment while I was the president of the local chamber of commerce. We had one of the agricultural offices in the province of Ontario, and that previous member happened to run that facility before he became a member of this Legislature. His comments to the local

community were that it would be over his dead body that that office would ever close. Well, I'm delighted to say that we don't believe in superstitions and those types of things, or the member wouldn't be with us today—he's not a member, but he's still here—because the offices were reduced to next to nothing under the former minister.

They're telling us to restore the cuts from our budget. Well, they destroyed a lot of agriculture. We're talking about restoring faith. In the previous administration, not only with agriculture but indeed with a number of services across the province, they slashed, and when people were bleeding to death, they threw some cash at it to try to stop the bleeding really quick. I can tell you what the farming community, which I meet with on a regular basis—and I had the honour of having the minister join me for a whole day in my riding, talking to stakeholders. We know they are in dire straits; there's no question about it. Nobody's going to deny that fact. But what they are telling us is that they realize that just throwing money at it is not going to fix it. What they are looking for are sustainable solutions.

Let me give you an example. To deal with BSE, as a first step, we've increased slaughterhouse capacity. Yes, it's a small step and we've got a long way to go, but they're telling us that's the right way to go: Don't stand and just throw money at a bad situation, but look for ways to build a system to deal with agriculture in a way that's sustainable not from day to day, but from year to year.

I can tell you the other thing that I hear from the farming community, and we're trying to work very closely with it. For the first time in a long time, we have a minister who's been there for a year. I was looking for some information just recently. I believe with the former government, the minister changed every year, or less than a year. That's almost as often as we change our socks and our clothes and all that stuff. So the farming community didn't really know who to turn to. But we do have a minister who listens, we have a minister who goes out. As I said, I was privileged to have the minister meet with all the different groups in my riding, the local federation of agriculture, the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture. He met the Christian Farmers and some folks who were devastated by a hailstorm on Canada Day that caused roughly \$10 million worth of hail damage to the apple crop in Durham and Northumberland. The minister was there to meet with them, to look at solutions, how to best address those things. He was there to listen. He talked to some other stakeholders who had a real interest—not just to farming, but to rural Ontario as a whole.

I guess what I'd say in winding things down is that we're talking about restoring budgets. Let me just highlight the budget of 2000 under the former government. To quote of the minister at the time, "Indeed, the 2000 budget was good news for all Ontario farmers." That's what the minister said. Let me tell you what the farmers said: "This is a do-nothing budget. We're still paying on everything we were paying on before."

Basically, I'm disappointed." That came from Don McGugan, president of the Lambton Federation of Agriculture. "Budget Missed Opportunity to Help Farmers"—Northern Daily News.

I could go on and on about this budget that the member wants to restore. Boy, they're certainly short-sighted. I'm certainly disappointed they even come out with this motion if they want us to support it. I'm not prepared to support it.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This debate really is exposing what I consider a disappointing litany not only of broken promises but promises as yet undelivered, like the BSE set-aside program and the \$30 million as well for our cattlemen.

Ottawa announced close to half a billion dollars. Alberta immediately ponied up a quarter of a billion for cattlemen. Farmers went to the ploughing match—no announcement. The Premier said there was no money. A few days later we see \$30 million, and farm families may well have to wait until Christmas to see any of that. And Ontario, unlike Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba, does not have those set-aside application forms out. How do you get the money with no forms?

Promises as yet undelivered, like the \$50-million election pledge to compensate tobacco farmers in Brant, Oxford, Elgin and Norfolk. Just this week, we heard Andy Mitchell, the fed ag minister, move on the \$71-million commitment previously made by Bob Speller, the former minister. Ontario is the tobacco-growing province. Ontario just declared war on tobacco and has jacked up taxes twice. Where is the \$50 million?

There was a hog crisis in 1998. Farmers came out looking for support. Our government had cheques in the mail in 30 days. My tobacco farmers and cattlemen have been waiting a lot longer than that.

As with that hog crisis, the personal loss, the emotional havoc I see in families farming tobacco and farming beef is incalculable. During the campaign, agriculture and food was described by this government as a lead ministry. We've seen a summer of budget cuts and endless ongoing difficult consultations. Farmers are asking, "What happened?" OMAF cut their budget by 20%. That's the biggest cut of any ministry in the Ontario government, and that's a government that is increasing spending.

Elimination of the municipal outlet drainage program: that's \$7 million. Terminating genetic research funding for beef, dairy, hogs: that's a \$3-million cut. The list goes on. Too many farmers are destined to fall through the cracks in the case program. That's the one that our minister would not sign. The Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council has proposed that the transition money—there's \$173 million—be used for SDRM, MRI and BSE support. Again, there's no response from this present government.

This government truly has turned its back on farmers, announcing that OMAF is being replaced by MOE for nutrient management compliance. We're seeing the same trend with source water protection. Over the last year,

I've met with trailer park owners, woodlot owners and sawmill operators, all from rural Ontario. MPAC is putting them out of business. By the same token, fruit and vegetable operations, egg hatcheries and corn dryers are facing that same assessment and taxation challenge. Woodlot owners are concerned that they are going to have that farmland comparison removed to derive their land value. Again, taxes go up.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I am rising to speak on the opposition day motion by Mr Hardeman, the member for Oxford, and a former Conservative Minister of Agriculture. I would like to inform the House that, in fact, the head office of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food is actually in my riding. It's quite a large new building, I think started by the NDP and finished by the Conservatives.

There's something very interesting. There's a "for lease" sign outside the headquarters of OMAF. You might ask why. Why are we trying to lease part of the OMAF office? The truth is that shortly after the building was opened, a lot of it was found to be unnecessary. Why? Well, it was found to be unnecessary because the member for Oxford, the agriculture minister of the day, cancelled a very significant program which had used a significant amount of space in this particular building. The member who has put forward the motion criticizing us, the member from Oxford, on his watch cancelled all the field offices in the province of Ontario.

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Now, what were agricultural field offices, often called extension offices? They employed people who were referred to as ag reps. These were agrologists on the ground who actually worked to help local farmers improve their agricultural practices, to update them to make sure they were using the most modern practices. The member from Oxford was responsible for cancelling all those field offices and turning them into a 1-800 number, essentially.

You would think, by listening to the members of the opposition, that farmers were critical of us. Well, listen to what they had to say about this move by the member from Oxford. Jack Wilkinson, then the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said:

"The government is gutting a system"—the Conservative government—"that has served us so well for so many years in many parts of the province. For many farmers, this is nothing more than a further erosion of ministry services in their communities.

"In some areas, the office has not only supported the extension work that has been so critical in making Ontario a leader in many areas of agriculture and technology transfer, but it has played an integral role in supporting farm and community organizational events."

That's what the agricultural community had to say about this member's record.

This member would also like us to think about the municipal outlet drainage program. It's interesting that the government that he was a part of cut the interest part of this program by half, from about \$3 million to about

\$1.5 million. In fact, when the furor arose—I've got one urban municipality and two rural municipalities—I thought I would look and see what my rural municipalities were actually getting from this program. One of my rural municipalities got an average of \$4,500 over the last six years. My other rural municipality got zero, zilch, nothing from this program. There were some municipalities that got \$180,000 per year on average over the last six years.

In fact, this is one of the things that was wrong with this program. It was not consistent in its application. We found that some municipalities were getting significant large amounts and other municipalities, rural municipalities, were getting nothing. So what we're doing is looking at this program and restructuring the delivery of services to make sure it makes more sense.

What about BSE funding? We've heard a lot of complaints from this member about our funding of BSE programs. Well, before the federal government got in the act, we consulted with the agricultural community. What they told us was that one of the big problems, now that the border's been closed, is that we have a lot of older animals on the farms and we can't get these older animals to slaughter because there's no capacity to have these animals slaughtered. We spent \$7 million on assisting the industry in building new permanent slaughter capacity for older animals. We'll be able to have about 7,000 more older animals per year slaughtered. The agricultural community tells us that this is very important.

In addition to that, we are providing \$30 million to our farm community in matching federal funds to make sure that we have additional assistance. I was very proud that the Premier announced that at the OMAF headquarters when he was visiting my riding.

In fact, I'd like to correct the record on one thing that the NDP leader said. He said that when we went to the plowing match, we had no announcements. That's just not factually correct. In fact, at the plowing match we announced \$31 million in additional funding for rural communities, because rural communities have told us that it's important to try to keep rural schools open, and we did make that very significant announcement when we visited the plowing match in Mr Murdoch's riding. So I totally reject the premise of the motion by the member from Oxford and I absolutely will not be supporting it, because we are doing good work for our rural communities, for our farmers and for agriculture in Ontario.

Mr Wilson: I just want to urge the government, in the three minutes I have, to be more pro-American. In the 14 years I have been in here, I don't think we've had anybody get up and talk about our relations with the United States. I suppose we leave that up to the federal government. But you're not going to get the BSE crisis solved, you're not going to get the border open, particularly the Liberal Party in Ottawa, if it keeps up its anti-American stance. I see that Carolyn Parrish, the MP, was at it again last week. So that's one thing farmers are telling me.

I and Bill Murdoch were at the Grey County Federation of Agriculture's 64th annual dinner last Saturday.

Just a couple of months before that I was touring farms in Simcoe county and was at a federation of agriculture barbecue hosted by Stephen Hall in Adjala-Tosorontio township, and the message there was very clear: How do we get the borders open? How do we help our beef farmers, our lamb producers and our other livestock producers who need to sell live animals into a free market across the border?

Having the border open is also important for almost every other industry. The fact of the matter is that 85% of the goods produced in my riding of Simcoe-Grey are transported to the United States of America. So that's my one plug: Do whatever you can to talk to your federal cousins and get us more favourable relations with the United States.

Finally, I just want to say: I have a number of community halls in my riding. I know the minister talked about it today. People should understand that that was a reaction from Walkerton, where we had to move quickly to bring in tough regulations to improve drinking water quality in the province. It has hurt dramatically our community halls. I've mentioned a number of them in the riding in remarks in the House in the past.

The fact of the matter is, I was in cabinet just before the election. We were planning to find the money to help these community halls. That's the truth. I hope that, rather than just diluting the regulations or extending the deadlines, you'll come up with a just a little bit of money. You would be heroes politically across rural and small-town Ontario, and with a number of church groups too, because a lot of churches rely on these community halls.

So I just say, community halls and better relations with the United States of America—let's get the BSE crisis solved. Improve the Ministry of Agriculture. Stop gutting it, when you promised the opposite, and do what's right for rural Ontario.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's my pleasure to rise today to remind people that Huron-Bruce is the largest agricultural producer in the province of Ontario. We are also the most rural riding within the province of Ontario. So I feel that when I speak, I know of what I speak.

What I would like to do, if I could have your indulgence, members of the House, is go backward before I go forward and talk about some of the things that I experienced in my first term—

Mr Dunlop: Carol, you're in government.

Mrs Mitchell: Well, there seems to be some revisionist history going on, so I'd like to clear the air on a few things. I know some of the gentlemen in the opposition share the same background as I do, and I'd like to talk about the first year that I was warden of Huron county, in 1999. That was the first year of the download to the rural municipalities.

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Our budget in Huron county went from \$26 million to \$65 million in one year. That was a result of many services—and I use ambulances as an example, and public health—being downloaded to municipalities. The

rural municipalities simply begged the provincial government at that time to stop the downloading. We were ill-equipped to deal with the services that were coming down to our rural municipalities. Our rural way of life was threatened by the constant downloading, and I can tell you that there was no consultation that happened during the whole downloading process. You received a phone call and—

Interjections.

Mrs Mitchell: Gentlemen, I have so much to share with you.

While I'm on ambulances, I just want to add this: I was appointed by the province to sit on the land ambulance transfer committee. The member who brought forward this motion today was also a member of that committee.

For two years, we talked every month about how the ambulances were going to be downloaded, while the ambulances were continuing to be downloaded, and I can tell you that after the two years of committee meetings, in the third year, the official opposition didn't even call the meetings because, really, we had talked about it for two years. What did we talk about? We talked about the Hamilton dispatch. We talked about cross-border billings. Those were two of the things that I remember the most.

I can tell you that our government has dealt with the Hamilton dispatch. I use that as an example just simply so that there's an understanding of how our rural municipalities were affected. I thank the committee members for the participation that they brought forward, because I know the comments that were made. Month after month, we heard it. How were we going to deal with it? I know that the member—who comes from a rural municipality, as well as the same background—and the wardens all met. Month after month, this downloading was dealt with. Our rural municipalities don't have the tax base that our urban counterparts do, but what I heard month after month was a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach: "We're not interested in the rural municipalities and what they contribute to the community of Ontario." There was no respect given to our rural way of life.

I can go on about the water, how we were moving toward user fees.

I have so much more to do and I know that many people will want to hear this some more, but I believe that we need to share our vision of where we're going in our commitment to rural communities, because I can tell you that our commitment to our rural communities and our agricultural community remains strong and is strong.

Over the last several weeks, the Ontario government has made very positive announcements which affect the agri-food sector. We have joined the BSE recovery. We put \$30 million on the table because we know how we have been affected in our rural communities.

Interjections.

Mrs Mitchell: I'm not done yet, so just wait.

We recognize that our maple syrup was an agricultural production and, therefore, we adjusted the property tax.

Some \$4.6 million to upgrade or replace our aging infrastructure; 18 agriculture facilities for education, laboratory and research; signed with the federal government for foreign animal health protection, which we know is so important; and provincial transitional funding in order to assist Ontario municipalities.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs Mitchell: I thank you for the time today. Unfortunately, I've run out of time. I have so much more that I would like to say about the commitment we have made.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm very pleased to be able to join in the debate this afternoon and, particularly, to support this motion.

I'm quite shocked, as a matter of fact, at the number of government speakers who have chosen today to speak about the previous government. It seems to me that, as I recall as a member of the government, I never wanted to use up my time on previous governments' initiatives. I was very proud of the kind of initiatives that we undertook, and I took every opportunity to speak about them.

I'm afraid it demonstrates the lack of substance in this government's initiatives that so many of its members would choose to speak about the former government rather than be proud of what this government is doing. But perhaps I can understand that.

As the member for the York North riding, of course I was particularly shocked at the introduction earlier in the year of Bill 27, with regard to greenbelt protection. It seemed to me that there was a willingness on the part of the government to look at protecting green spaces but very little about protecting farmers. As the months have gone by since then, I think there has been growing disillusionment with regard to the initiatives put forward by this government.

In the few brief moments I have, I want to talk very quickly about the municipal outlet drainage program, because this is of particular significance in a part of my riding, that of the Holland Marsh. As many will know, this was introduced by the government without consultation or any advance warning.

Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said that Ontario farmers who count on municipal drain outlets to handle water from their tile drain systems are in for a big surprise. I would just point out to the member from Guelph-Wellington that there is a difference between a tile drainage program, which was a lending program, and municipal outlet drainage—two very different things for farmers.

Drains are an essential part of rural infrastructure and have been there for decades. They need to be engineered, installed and maintained. This is an essential part of the business of farming. So, over those many decades, the farmers, the municipalities and the province have worked together to create a well-built, intricate web of public and private drains. Without this, farmers will continue to invest in outlet drains, but certainly we will see that there are fewer of them who will be able to do this. Capacity will shrink, standards will fall and maintenance will suffer.

In my riding, the Holland Marsh is one of Ontario's most important vegetable-growing areas, and of course it has a vast network of canals and drains. So this is certainly not good news for the farmers in my riding.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd also like to thank Mr Hardeman, the member from Oxford, for bringing forward this important opposition day motion to give voice to agriculture and to the ridings we serve. In Durham region, which I represent, it's the second-largest industry.

Many of the members who have spoken today have addressed the issues. What I want to do is pay respect to the agricultural leaders in my riding of Durham, and they are eminent list:

Don Rickard, past president of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair just last year;

Jim Rickard, chair of the Ontario Apple Growers and chairman of the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission;

Harvey Graham, past president and a leader for many years of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association;

John Wolters, representative of Scugog on the region's agricultural advisory committee and past president of the cattlemen's association;

Tim Sargent, a representative on the Durham agricultural advisory committee;

Joyce Kelly, former secretary of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies, past president of the women's institute and a great aid to agriculture in our area;

Ted Watson a member of the Durham region agricultural advisory committee and an active farm leader in our area;

Kirk Kemp, a young person, a board member of the International Dwarf Fruit Tree Association;

Karen Yellowlees, the long-time secretary for the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture;

Jacqueline Vaneyk, past president of the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture;

Ted Eng, president, Durham Region Federation of Agriculture;

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Dave Davidson, a councillor on the Ontario Cattlemen's Association;

Dale Mountjoy, vice-president of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, Region 4;

Anna Bragg, the first woman president of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, who just lives down the road;

Hubert Schillings, of White Feather Farms, a director of the Ontario Egg Producers;

Charles Stevens, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, also a board member of AGCare;

Walter Beath, the first chair of Durham region, past president of the cattlemen's association and still an active member in our community;

Henk Mulders from Link Greenhouses, a greenhouse operator and a young entrepreneur, showing that the true spirit of agriculture in Durham is alive and well;

Kevin Werry, from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario;

Tom Morawetz, the past president of the Ontario Retail Farm Equipment Dealers' Association, Evergreen Farm and Garden Ltd;

Sandy and Fred Archibald, from Archibald Orchards and Estate Winery—truly value-added agriculture in my riding;

Paul MacArthur, a professional agronomist in Durham region;

Irwin and Alissa Smith from Ocala Winery, also inventive and entrepreneurial members of the agricultural community;

Mr and Mrs Tom Barrie—Tom is the soil and crop improvement representative;

Mr and Mrs Eric Bowman, dairy farmers and very talented agricultural leaders;

Shirley and Gerald Brown, dairy and now cash crop;

Brian Caswell;

Mr David Gibson, from the apple growers' association;

Arnold Kerry, from Utica Farm Equipment;

Dave Frew.

The list of leaders in Durham region whom I consult with regularly are all concerned about the plight of agriculture. I could go on, but the list, I think, has been addressed. The issues have been addressed. What's missing is real leadership, and a cut of 20% from the Minister of Agriculture sends a signal and worries the farmers of the Ontario.

Mr Peters, do the right thing: Stand up for your ministry at the table in cabinet.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I too want to thank our agriculture critic, Ernie Hardeman, for presenting this motion today.

The Minister of Agriculture, after our lead speaker, said he felt like he was getting a lecture. Then he turned and started to give us a history lesson, because the only response they could have is to try to say, "What you didn't do ..." or "What you did do...." But the question today is, what are they doing? What is the Ministry of Agriculture and this Liberal government doing for rural Ontario today?

Now, municipal politicians in my riding say that they're doing nothing. They have never been so upset with a government as they are with this one. But don't listen to me and don't listen to the people on my side of the House. Let's see what Jim Brownell, member of provincial Parliament for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, says. I quote from the *Chesterville Record*:

"Brownell Apologetic For Record.

"There hasn't been much that has put farming on the pedestal since we were elected to government....There hasn't been one thing.'

"I don't think they understand the struggles, outside urban Ontario.'

"Individuals sitting in ivory towers thinking of things'....

"Brownell said that he and other rural MPPs in the Liberal caucus were caught off guard when the Ontario

Ministry of Agriculture killed funding for municipal drains July 27.

“Jean-Marc Lalonde (of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) was as dumbfounded as I was. I was floored.”

So you don't have to listen to us on this side of the House; you need only listen to their own members who have said publicly that their government has done nothing for farmers in this province. That is the public record of those members.

Now I want to talk about some other issues, because our members have articulated very well what this government has failed to do. What it has done is try to blame other governments for what it's failing to do. But the province only has one government at a time, and this is the government. It's the one that must act and help farmers at a more critical time than we've seen in 40 years.

Some of the other things where this government has failed in regard to rural people: First of all, it started right in their own throne speech. Not once did they mention the word “rural” in their throne speech. We should have known then that there would be no focus, no care, no compassion for rural Ontario.

We've got the Ministry of the Environment that wants to shut down sawmills because they want to term sawdust a contaminant, a hazardous material—

Interruption.

Mr Yakabuski: I wish somebody could shut that BlackBerry off. I hope it's shut off before they shut down all the sawmills in Renfrew county, because the employees of Renfrew county depend on those sawmills to make their living.

What about regulation 170 that this government is in process of implementing? Before they say that it was the previous government that brought it in, every Liberal member voted for that regulation and Bill 175. They wanted it strengthened. So they can forget about that line of attack against the previous government. This is the government. They've got to stop thinking they are still in opposition. I know you enjoyed it when you were in opposition, because you could get up and be critical. But do you know what? Once you have the mantle of leadership placed over your shoulders, you've got to carry it. Now carry it.

Mr Dunlop: It's my pleasure to close off our caucus's debate on this tonight. I'd like to begin by thanking our agriculture critic, Ernie Hardeman, for a job well done.

I've been travelling to plowing matches for the last 15 years, on and off, across the province of Ontario. The one thing I've never seen before is the Premier of our province booed by the agricultural community. I think that says it all about this government's stand and its priorities. This government simply does not view agriculture as a priority. It's plain and simple. They don't care about the rural communities and it's been said over and over again.

Let's see some of the sneaky things they've done through the summer months; for example, the job losses we have seen across this province. The Frost Centre: It is

shameful how that was handled, completely shameful. It has hurt the economic viability of a community and put 30-some people out of jobs.

Let's talk a little bit for a moment about some of the people who are having very difficult times in our rural communities and have to have their spouses go out to work at other jobs. We've just seen the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia, the Rideau Regional Centre and the southwest regional centre in Chatham all decimated with the closing, in 2009, of those centres. Do you know what? This government has decided to close those centres with no plan. There are over 2,000 jobs at stake and there are over 1,000 residents.

The Minister of Community and Social Services says, “Believe us. We have a plan.” We asked her what the plan is. There is no plan but they are going to develop a plan. In the meantime, we have 1,000 residents who have no idea where they are going. I'm getting literally hundreds of e-mails in my community alone. We've got over 2,000 employees from OPSEU and across our province who are doing an excellent job, and they have no idea what's going to happen to their jobs except that they've been told the places are closing down. That's the type of sneaky thing that's done. It isn't done when the House is sitting; it's done in the middle of summer or before we come back. That's another thing.

We get talking about the gas tax. I just cannot believe my ears when I hear that the gas tax is only going to urban municipalities with transit systems. Does everybody in the province of Ontario not pay taxes when they buy gasoline?

Interjection: Yes, we do.

Mr Dunlop: So why would it only be going to urban municipalities with transit systems? That's completely unheard of. All of our municipal representatives, people with road systems in our small villages, small towns and our townships, need that money for their roads and bridges. We talk about how much this government cares about those small municipalities. Well, we've seen nothing.

As we close down this debate, I cannot believe that the people in the House tonight wouldn't support this resolution. It's a resolution that doesn't deal directly with the government. It just asks you to restore funding in a proper way and to stand up for the citizens who live in our wonderful province in rural Ontario. By far the vast majority of the geography of Ontario is made up of the rural citizens. They need our support and they need the support of this government. Please do not continue to make—

Mr Yakabuski: Support the motion.

Mr Dunlop: Support the motion and keep Ontario strong by keeping rural Ontario strong. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all who have participated in the debate, but the time has expired and I am required to put the question.

Mr Hardeman has moved opposition day number 1:

That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To recognize the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's budget has been reduced by over 20%;

To reinstate full and future funding to the municipal outlet drainage program, which has been cut and given only temporary transition funding;

To reinstate full and future funding to the genetic research programs of the Ontario dairy herd improvement, Ontario swine improvement and beef improvement organizations, so that Ontario food quality and safety will continue to excel;

To provide BSE funding to Ontario's ruminant industry quickly as is being done in other provinces; and

To call upon Premier McGuinty to fulfill his campaign promise to support the farmers of Ontario by doing these things immediately.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bill.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the table.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Dunlop, Garfield

Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.

Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the table.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John

Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra

Qaadri, Shafiq
Rama, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Takharr, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 26; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L) Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Milloy, John (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)		Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Lanark-Carleton	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Peterson, Tim (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Markham	Delaney, Bob (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Baird, John R. (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Craiton, Kim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Nipissing	
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Northumberland	
		Oak Ridges	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Zimmer, David (L)
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Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 20 October 2004

Mercredi 20 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 100, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo had the floor. I recognize the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to ask for unanimous consent to defer the time remaining for the member for Kitchener-Waterloo from last night to a future second reading debate on Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kitchener-Waterloo had spoken for approximately five minutes. The request is for unanimous consent to allow her to defer her remaining time. Is there unanimous consent to allow for that? Agreed.

In rotation, we now turn to the New Democrats and I recognize the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm glad I stayed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Thank you. I don't want any heckling, OK? I have important things to say here.

First of all, let me say that I'm not going to spend a lot of my time tonight going into all the details of why New Democrats are vehemently opposed to this bill and will fight it every step of the way. I know my leader Howard Hampton—this is also his portfolio—has laid out very clearly the problems we have with this bill, and my colleagues to follow me will be clearly articulating those views tonight.

What I want to spend my time doing, because I don't have sufficient time in the daily sittings here, is to talk

about something that means a great deal to me, and that is renewable energy, conservation and efficiency.

Hon Mr Sorbara: You're one of the city experts on it.

Ms Churley: I used to be one of the city experts. I can see what kind of night this is going to be, Mr Speaker, unless you control—well, he's not a pit bull exactly—the finance minister over there.

When I was at city hall, back in 1988 I ran as an environmentalist and an energy conservationist and was very instrumental in starting the energy conservation office at city hall, and the atmospheric fund, which is now famous.

Hon Mr Sorbara: That's why you should be supporting this bill

Ms Churley: That's why I'm not supporting this bill. I still have a very keen interest, and have throughout my political career and before. I've been following with great interest the program the Liberals put forward. Of course, I notice their latest conservation program seems to be about grow-ops or whatever they call them.

Interjection: Marijuana.

Ms Churley: Marijuana—saving energy from shutting those places down.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): What is Monte smoking?

Ms Churley: Yes, what is Monte smoking? But really, I want to talk about the problems with the Liberal government's so-called plan for efficiency and conservation.

We have learned a lot in the last few years, and we particularly learn from countries like Germany. I'm sure the Minister of Energy, whom I'm very pleased to see here tonight, is very well aware of the recent conference that was held here in Toronto. His own parliamentary assistant was there, as was I. Kathleen Wynne, the member from Don Valley, and others were there and it was a very good conference. I attended part of it.

One of the most interesting aspects of the conference was listening to a parliamentarian from Germany. His name is Dr Hermann Scheer. I'm not absolutely sure if I've got the pronunciation.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Spell it out then.

Ms Churley: I'll tell you later. I think it's Scheer.

He was extremely and highly critical of the Liberals' RFP process, the process to bring renewable energy into the grid. He said it won't work. He was very clear about that, that it will not work, that only the biggest can win. What we mean by "only the biggest" in this case is the

big gas plants, the nuclear plants. Smaller renewable energy projects cannot compete. The whole process is rigged for the traditional, non-renewable power plants, which is really too bad.

1850

Hon Mr Sorbara: I thought we were going to get a speech of substance here.

Ms Churley: Believe me, this is of substance because if we don't change our thinking now and move away, not just from coal plants, but gas, all of the non-renewable energy, nuclear, we are in big trouble. What he said was that the cultural barrier is stalling renewable energy. I found this, and it's half a quote anyway. He said, "There's no law that forbids wrong thinking, ie fossil fuels and nuclear."

What he talked about very clearly was what they did in Germany. It was a whole different process from the one this government is proposing, and that's the RFP process. It doesn't work. He said it very clearly. They tried it there. It's been tried in Germany, Spain, and I think Japan and other countries and it hasn't worked. It's rigged for the big, traditional, non-renewable energy companies, those with lots of bucks and deep pockets that are well established within the system.

Today, as well, I attended a press conference put on by the David Suzuki Foundation. They came out with a report called Smart Generation: Powering Ontario with Renewable Energy. There weren't too many people at that press conference. I'm going to tell you quickly what happened. They called me to book the studio for them. I said, "Well, it's cabinet day." Dr Suzuki flew in for this press conference. He believes it's that important. "Nine o'clock to 9:30, all the press will be up there waiting to scrum the cabinet ministers, so have it later, because it's important that this be attended by the press, that the story get out there." They were all prepared. Dr Suzuki was here, downstairs having a coffee, and I heard the cabinet meeting had been changed to 10:45.

Hon Mr Sorbara: No, it was never changed.

Ms Churley: Well, we weren't informed, I can tell you that, so I could inform them properly.

Then what happened was that I went and talked to the press about what was happening and they said they would try to make it by 11:15. Dr Suzuki and his colleagues hung around and held it later. I must say some—and I thank them—of the media did show up and there will be, I hope, some very positive press from this because it's an excellent report. I'm sure the minister is going to read it and I'm sure he's going to view the recommendations quite seriously because, as Dr Scheer said, there is a cultural barrier. We have to turn the way we do things, the way we think, on its head. That's a hard thing to do because we, as a society, have done things in a certain way for many years, going way back, and to start turning it around is really hard to do.

But this government is not doing it, and it has the opportunity to do so. One of the advantages the Liberal government has that governments before didn't have is that it's now been tried; it's been done. We're not talking

about reinventing the wheel here. Germany, France, Japan and other countries—I think Germany did it because they knew they were phasing out nuclear power forever. They didn't want to start getting back into spending lots of money on infrastructure for gas plants and other non-renewables, so they said, "OK, we've got to get serious about this. We have to find a new way of doing things."

What the David Suzuki Foundation panel spoke about today—and I should also mention that Dr Mark Winfield and others at the Pembina Institute recently put out an excellent report; I believe the Sierra Club as well. So there are some great minds thinking about this problem we have in moving ourselves away from non-renewables to renewables. It's really instructive to look at their reports, talking about the problems with the Liberal plan and then looking at the recommendations that could turn this ship around.

I want to spend a little time talking about what Dr Suzuki and the panel discussed with us today and some of the recommendations, because one of the things that was made very clear—very, very clear—I think there were two things that came out of this for me today.

Hon Mr Sorbara: How clear was it?

Ms Churley: It was very clear, actually. People seem to think the energy portfolio is so complicated that they can't understand it. In many ways, it is, but it can also be very simple in many ways, because if we're going to change the way we do things, we have to change the system, the approach to how we bring power on to the grid.

What was very clear—and I must say that Dr Suzuki and the panel were very polite. They were very careful and in a couple of instances even congratulated the government for some of the things they were doing. I'm sure you have that in your notes, Minister. But I'm going to tell you some of the things they weren't so positive about.

Of course, I talked to some of the media after and said, "Well, I'm not going to be so polite. I'm going to read between the lines here, and I'm going to tell you what they were really saying in there today." What they were saying today is that the system the government has put in place for renewables will not work, and what they're doing for the nuclear industry here is what they need to be doing for renewables. I'm sure the finance minister is not following this really intensely, so I'll explain this to him now. These two things—

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'm rapt.

Ms Churley: I'm sure you are, and you should be, because you have power, Minister. You can make this happen. You can tell the energy minister what to do here, I'm sure.

They have done this in Germany and other countries, and it has worked. That's what makes this so credible. It's not pie in the sky, it's not a wish list; it has happened, and it has worked.

Two things are needed: a fixed price over a fixed period of time for the renewables. What they've done is

give that, once again, to the tired, old nuclear industry, which has huge cost overruns and humongous problems with what we do with the waste, as you know. It's a huge problem. It pollutes our water. It's just not going to work. But you gave it to them. You're in bed with those guys already, with them and the gas producers and all these people, which means you've already gone down that road. I'm saying that it's not too late. Come back. Get out of bed now. Get out, get dressed and come over to the right side of things, because what you're doing is wrong. You go down that road and it's very difficult to get back and do the right things to get the renewables in. You need the fixed price over a fixed period of time for the renewables. You've done this for nuclear. Why not do it for the renewables?

The second piece, of course, is access to the grid, which they don't have. This is a key—

Hon Mr Sorbara: Who doesn't have it?

Ms Churley: The renewables.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Of course they have it.

Ms Churley: No, they don't. See, the finance minister doesn't know and nor should he. He doesn't have to know the details of everything.

Hon Mr Sorbara: How can they have access to the grid and not have renewables?

Ms Churley: They don't have access to the grid. There are all kinds of complications. They are being frozen out. The RFP process is set up in such way—it's not just me saying this. It's David Suzuki, it's the Pembina Institute, it's the Sierra Club and many others. A lot of the small, independent producers are saying they can't get in. They're being frozen out by this system.

The other thing that was made really clear in terms of reshaping the way we think about how we do things is that conservation, efficiency and renewables must be integrated into one strategy, not separated out. What I believe Dr Suzuki said today, or one of the panellists, is that people are ready, the renewables are ready, but the government is not acting. That may have been my comment at the end, but that's what they meant: People are ready, the renewables are ready, but you are not ready. They said that very clearly today in the press conference. Why do you think they came here and held a press conference on this, for heaven's sake?

Interjection.

Ms Churley: It's because you're not doing the right thing.

I'm just going to give you some of the details from this report. I want to make sure you understand that if we don't start moving in the right direction here, we are letting down our children and our grandchildren and generations to follow.

I don't know if you saw this article, "Electricity: Lessons from Germany."

Hon Mr Sorbara: Of course.

Ms Churley: We've got to pound them over the head with it. They just don't get it. But there's an opportunity now to move forward, and that's what I'm talking about here tonight.

Some of the things that David Suzuki and the panel talked about today—I'm just going to read you the first paragraph. "Currently, Ontario is largely powered by polluting coal-fired power plants and aging nuclear plants. It is an unsustainable combination—coal plants contribute to southern Ontario's poor air quality and summer smog, while nuclear plants are plagued with unresolved safety issues, chronic underperformance" problems, "massive cost overruns" and unresolved toxic waste issues. These centralized plants are part of an "expensive and increasingly fragile transmission grid. Getting out of this crisis is not possible with the same type of thinking that led us into it.... It is time for Ontario's priorities to change."

1900

What this report does and what these recommendations lay out—it's a blueprint, or maybe we could call it a green print, for the government to follow in terms of turning this ship around.

They talk about some of the problems with conventional sources of energy.

Another good quote from today—if I can find it here—which I quite like, applies to the government of the day. It was something like, "Governments don't look at the world as it really is." I thought that was pretty good, actually.

Hon Mr Sorbara: That's startling. Is that original?

Ms Churley: No. It wasn't mine; it was somebody else's. But I thought it was good.

Everything is put into silos. So you separate out all these pieces instead of looking at—it's all one airshed. We all breathe the same air. It's all one piece. Health is related to energy. Governments, it's true, separate all these pieces out. But they're connected.

The problem that they talked about with conventional sources of energy—and they say this very clearly. Again, I thought the way they put it was pretty polite: "There is a risk that Ontario will favour large, expensive and centralized nuclear and natural gas plants to solve its electricity woes. Boosting nuclear power and natural gas and continuing to rely on coal power are not sustainable solutions."

We know you're going to back down on shutting down the coal plants. We know that; that has been said. You had a Liberal conference where it was one of the questions that they talked about: Under what conditions—if I can paraphrase this—could the Liberal government back off from closing down the coal plants by 2007? It was a question on the paper at a Liberal convention.

Nuclear: Nuclear power is extremely expensive and is highly subsidized. Let me go into that for a minute. When we talk about the price of electricity and the costs of generating electricity, we don't even think about or talk about the externalities of those costs. By externalities, in this case I mean the health costs; the costs of dealing with the waste, for instance, from the nuclear power. Those costs are all externalized. They're not included in the price that we pay for power. Of course,

when you get into looking at the real costs of producing these kinds of non-renewables, it would be much, much higher than it actually is now. But we separate those out. Of course, bringing in renewables would solve that problem.

May I say as well, as has been pointed out by the experts from Germany, that it has been a huge boost to the economy in Germany and other countries that have moved forward. It has created thousands and thousands of jobs, and it has boosted the economy.

I have been told that the second-largest user of wind power in Germany is the steel industry. It has created huge jobs there.

They also go into natural gas. This is a hobbyhorse of mine because—and the minister knows this—there's a proposal to build a huge new gas plant in my riding of Toronto-Danforth, in Riverdale. At first, they proposed that it would be cogeneration. That was the proposal. It was made very clear to the community. I don't have time now to go into all of the details of some of the problems with that proposal, but right now the biggest problem, among many others, is that it's not going to be a cogeneration plant. Can you believe that, in this day and age? They're going to build a huge, new, humongous, big gas plant, and it's not even going to be cogeneration.

For the benefit of those of you, like the finance minister, who may not know what that means, it means you produce the steam—

Hon Mr Sorbara: Oh, my goodness. Why the insults? What have I done to you?

Ms Churley: The steam actually also is used to produce energy and heat buildings.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Oh, really? Is that for my benefit?

Ms Churley: Yes, exactly; for your benefit.

What they say here is that natural gas may be cleaner than coal and can play a limited role in local generation, but it still has significant climate change and human health impacts. Natural gas production contributes to wilderness and habitat destruction. "A decrease in natural gas reserves has meant a doubling of its price—with wild price fluctuations" which makes it much less attractive as an energy source.

I'm not even going to go into the problems with coal. I know some of the Tories advocate clean coal. There's no such thing, so that's not the way to go either. It leaves us no option. We have to turn the ship around and start doing all the things recommended in these reports that will lead us down the right road to renewable energy.

I'm going to say again that it has been made very clear that the government's proposal and the RFP process that is in place now is not going to do that. You can stand up and bluster all you want about, "Oh, we're bringing in more than you," and you'll say, "You shut some down," and blah, blah, blah. The reality is, you're the government now, we're in an energy crisis here that is only going to get worse, and you're spending megabucks on new nuclear plants, megabucks on new gas plants, when we have a blueprint in front of us, a green print for what to do.

I have used this opportunity to talk a little bit. I hope to have another opportunity at another time to talk in more detail about what is wrong with the government's plan to bring renewable energy into this province.

I will say, coming back to some of the more substantive parts of the bill, that I sat on the committee, I made a number of amendments, and the government rejected every single one of them. They were amendments recommended by communities and by the environmental and conservation movement, and every single one of them was turned down. We could have looked at this and perhaps supported it, but every single amendment that we put forward, that would have improved it, was turned down. So we are vehemently opposed to this bill. We will make sure that we'll do everything we can to defeat you on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'm pleased to respond to the member from Riverdale. First of all, she claimed it was a rigged RFP, while there were literally dozens of organizations that have submitted more than 4,000 megawatts of proposals. We'll be announcing the successful bidders next month.

Second, she spoke of the Suzuki Foundation. I've read the report. I'd been in contact with them prior to its writing. They are very complimentary about this government's initiatives and efforts and urge us on.

Applause.

Hon Mr Duncan: That's right.

In response to the recommendations, the essence of the recommendations is that we can achieve higher targets than the government set. What I said to that today was that I hope we can. That is going to be our goal. We are moving toward the undertakings we made. We'll achieve those, and my view is that hopefully we can move beyond those undertakings.

With respect to Germany and Denmark, do you know what? The member forgets that they incinerate in Germany. I suppose she doesn't support incineration either. But she may want to check her facts on that. I would remind the member that the Germans have had a 20-year policy on this stuff. No government in Ontario, until this one last year, embarked on this.

With respect to the coal-fired situation, that member is trying to slow down the closure of the Lakeview coal plant. That's her objective. She wants to keep Lakeview open—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Will you resign if you don't close the coal-fired plant?

Hon Mr Duncan: No.

That means she wants to keep Lakeview open and not provide power for downtown Toronto. She has publicly said that.

The final point I wanted to make is with respect to small operations—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Duncan: Yes, we're providing for net metering and distributed generation. We've already begun the regulatory changes, so we're addressing that.

It is important to also note that if the policies of the member's party were in place, nobody would have been on the RFP, because all the work in renewables is going on in the private sector, but she opposes any kind of private involvement—what a shame. We're going to make sure there are renewables in Ontario.

Mr Barrett: I think the member for Toronto-Danforth used the term “paraphrased.” What we're seeing is perhaps a Liberal change of heart with respect to the 2007 deadline on the closure of coal-fired plants, and I think a lot of people would concur with that kind of direction. The real world does kick in.

It may be of interest to the member from Toronto-Danforth that I've had a number of meetings with the Power Workers' Union on this issue, as have a number of my Ontario PC colleagues. The Power Workers, as the member would know, represent a large majority of Ontario's electrical employees and have done so for well over 60 years. They are out there running the plants. They know of what they speak.

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In my meetings, I've always left with a very clear message from the Power Workers' Union. The 2007 coal-fired deadline doesn't make any sense, and it is clearly not doable. The member may know of their brief. It's titled *The Role of Coal*. The union is advocating and continues to advocate the rapid commercialization of new clean coal technology, a term that we've heard very recently in the federal election to the south, a proposal that is reinforced by the George Bush platform. When the Power Workers' Union talks about clean coal technology, they talk about SCRs being installed on our plants in Ontario. As we would all know, SCRs are the selective catalytic reduction units which take out most of the nitrous oxides in the emissions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was pleased to be able to hear the member from Toronto-Danforth, Ms Churley, speak on behalf of herself and her constituents in Toronto-Danforth, certainly on behalf of this caucus, with passion for an environmentally progressive future for this province, with passion for an environmentally friendly hydroelectric system: a hydroelectric system that's public; a hydroelectric system that sells electricity at cost; a hydroelectric system that is a regulated one so that it is the servant of the people of this province, of working women and men, of their parents and of their kids here in Ontario, rather than the mechanism for a profit by profiteers and profit-makers, not just Ontarian and Canadian but, inevitably, increasingly from beyond our borders.

I tell you that this party, the New Democratic Party, has been clear, consistent and unequivocal in its support and advocacy for public, regulated hydroelectricity, electricity at cost. Electricity is far too important to the daily lives of every Ontarian for it to be allowed to slip into the hands of profit-makers and profiteers.

Howard Hampton, author of the book *Public Power*, a fascinating and incredibly thorough analysis of the history of electricity and, indeed, the NDP's proposal and

commitment for its future, has been clear and unequivocal in his position on hydro. Marilyn Churley, as our environment critic has spoken, as will every other New Democrat in this caucus, against this bill which will lead us down the ruinous path of privatized hydro.

Shortly, in an hour or so, we'll be hearing from Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, who will lend a very unique northern perspective. So Shelley Martel in around 45 minutes' time—I encourage people—

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I always enjoy the speeches from my friend from Toronto-Danforth, but tonight I must tell you that I was extremely disappointed in the way in which she skewed even the various commentaries that have been made on Bill 100, which is going to be the bill that represents the foundation for the creation of a strong new energy system in this province.

One could have quoted the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, which says that Bill 100 represents a good start, and certainly from the perspective of renewables. She could have quoted the Canadian Association for Renewable Energies, which said much the same thing, and finally, the Canadian Wind Energy Association.

The things that she did not put on the record are even more informative. My friend the Minister of Energy mentioned her opposition to electric capacity which will replace Lakeview, which is, as we all know, spewing fumes into the air. She's opposing the taking out of service of that facility. The other thing she didn't mention is her record and her government's record while the NDP was in power, and particularly given that she was talking about renewable energy. The legacy of that government is to have cancelled an agreement with the province of Manitoba for hydro power, waterfall power that would have supplied this province for decades and decades and decades. She and her government cancelled. Instead, what did they do? They spent millions of dollars buying rainforest in Costa Rica, the strangest bit of energy policy that this province has ever seen. So I invite her, when she responds or wraps up her speech, to at least put that other part of the story on the record.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Toronto Danforth, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms Churley: My, my, I wish I had more than two minutes to respond to all that drivel.

First of all, let me read to you what Dalton McGuinty said when they were in opposition, and when we were in government, about that power agreement with Manitoba: “We now know that if we cancel the deal today, its going to cost us” \$2 million, “but if we wait until the end of the environmental assessment hearing, it's going to cost us over \$200 million.” That's not the right quote, is it? Find it for me while I go on. It's not the good one I really wanted to read because he said something—

In other words, Dalton McGuinty was urging our government at the time to not go there. I must tell you—and I'll have more time later to talk about this—that there are

some real concerns about where the proposal is to build these power lines, through aboriginal, through First Nations land, endangered species—so that's another subject I'm going to get into. But Dalton said, "Cancel it." He said, "Don't wait." But I want to speak directly to the minister here. Shame on him. I wonder if he's going to resign if those plants aren't closed down until 2007.

But let me say to him, on this PEC plant that's been proposed for my riding, they are going ahead without a full environmental assessment. You know what? One of the conditions that we had asked for, which they turned down, was connecting the closure of the Lakeview coal plant to the building of this plant. Shame on them. Why do you think they wouldn't connect it? We asked for a number of conditions to be attached to that, and one was, "OK, if you're going to reduce pollution in the airshed, guarantee that you will close that plant down." And guess what? They refused to make that a condition to the building of this plant. What does that tell you about their commitment to shutting down the coal plants in this province?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 100 tonight. I had the privilege of travelling with the committee on social policy. I'll confess that, as a new member of the Legislature, I didn't have a lot of background in this sector, but I have to say that having gone through that experience and listened to people around the province, and having become familiar with some of the literature, we in this government are being very ambitious in this sector, as in other sectors at this point. We're being very ambitious and bold in our attempt to put in place a structure that will act in the best public interest. I think that what's important for people to understand is that there has been an obscuring of the debate on this issue. The presentation of this debate as a public-private issue really obscures the issue.

What citizens want to know is whether we can ensure a stable and sufficient supply of electricity. They want to know how we can be more environmentally friendly. They want to know how we can ensure the safety of our supply. And they want to know how we can do that in an affordable way. I'm going to talk about this for a few minutes and I'm going to share my time, Mr Speaker, with my colleague from Mississauga West.

What we're dealing with here is an issue of fundamental importance, and even with aggressive conservation measures, we're going to have to renew 80% of the electricity supply in Ontario by 2020. So if we don't have a framework in place, if we don't have a structure in place that can plan for that and that can deal with the issues of what is the mix going to be, what should the mix of supply be, where is it going to come from, how is it going to be distributed, we are going to be in serious trouble.

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We have to take a balanced approach that's going to recognize that Ontarians must pay the full cost of power.

That's not an approach that's been taken by previous governments. In fact, previous governments have shied away from a practical and reasonable approach here, and have instead moved back and forth and have confused the issue and confused the public on how to produce a stable market, a stable supply. We've got to have price stability. We've got to have a structure in place that encourages innovation, and that's one of the pieces of Bill 100 that I think is the most important. We're putting a structure in place that's going to allow for a plan to be developed that will encourage innovation, and we've already moved to that in terms of the RFPs that have been put out, the call to the public, to the business sector to come up with suggestions for how to get more renewables into the mix.

We have to encourage that mix of sources. We have to instill a culture of conservation. If there's one piece of this bill that there was universal agreement on, it is that the move toward conservation is critical. We must do that. We must instill in our children. We must change the habits of those of us who don't have a consciousness of conservation, and we've got to do that in a very systematic way.

So I think it's important that we recognize that we're going to have to act on a number of fronts. We're going to have to look at the curriculum in our schools. We're going to have to look at the practices in our building, our construction sector. We're going to have to look at all of our practices that are wasteful of electricity, that do not recognize that we're dealing with a fragile commodity. We're dealing with a commodity that's not endless, that's not easy to replace and that we have wasted over the generations.

What this bill does is, it sets out a framework for putting a plan in place to deal with those issues. It doesn't obscure the debate by focusing on the public-private. We're committed to not selling off public assets, but we're also committed to generating enough electricity that we can leave that legacy for our children. If we don't do that, then all the other things that we're trying to do in government are moot, because we've got to have a reliable supply of electricity.

When I was first elected last year, if anyone had asked me what the most important file in government was, I think, with my background, I would have right away said public education. But if someone asked me that question today, I think that I would have to say that a reliable affordable supply of electricity is fundamental. Without that, we can't turn on the lights in our schools.

So I am committed to supporting this bill, and I think that Minister Duncan and the people who have worked on it have a great deal to be proud of.

The Acting Speaker: Continuing on in this rotation, I recognize the member from Mississauga West.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): If there is any doubt of the need for restructuring in our energy sector, one need only ask, what if we did nothing? Where was the status quo taking us? Without restructuring Ontario's electricity pricing mechanism, the status quo was adding more debt than the special levy in Ontarians' monthly

electricity bills was taking off. Without restructuring, Ontario's risk of another blackout, such as the one of August 2003, was severe. Without restructuring, there would be a certain power shortage. Regardless of how conservation measures were applied, our grid would continue to age without maintenance, and interest charges might be the fastest-growing part of our electricity bills.

If we choose to restructure—and we do—then our goals are as simple as they are intuitive. Ontario needs electrical power that's reliable and sustainable. We need our electrical power at stable and competitive rates. Ontarians recognize there is no power without cost and no power without risk. The previous government acted hastily and without anything like a long-term plan. They froze electricity rates below the true cost of production of the power. In addition to the \$5.6-billion legacy deficit that they abandoned when Ontarians chased them out of office a year ago, they also left an extra \$1 billion of electricity pricing debt from a price cap set too low.

Sensible restructuring means that the Ontario Energy Board will approve an annual rate plan for residential and other low-volume consumers. This rate will be based on reasonable forecasts of regulated contract and market supply of electricity. This rate, periodically set, will ensure that prices to consumers are stable, fair and predictable and that the mechanism to set those prices is fair and open. It also ensures that power wasters won't be adding debt charges to the bills of power conservers.

A gentleman visited my constituency office shortly after the old rate cap was lifted. He brought in his first bill under the new rate. We analyzed it for him and found that, as a result of the removal of the rate cap, his electricity bill went up by a total of 20 cents in the first month under the new rate of 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour.

Another thing that Ontarians know is that machines don't last forever. Our large-scale generating stations were built from the 1960s through the 1980s, and they use 1960s and 1970s technology. Imagine driving your 1973 car day after day for more than 30 years. Even with the most careful of maintenance, the day-in, day-out, year-after-year wear and tear causes the best machinery to wear out.

Ontario needs to refurbish, rebuild, replace or conserve more than 25,000 megawatts of electrical capacity by the year 2020 just to stay even at present rates of consumption. Let's put that another way. That's the equivalent of six generating stations the size of Pickering, and that includes the phasing out of Ontario's coal-generating capacity.

We know that electricity restructuring is more than power generation. To avoid the runaway costs and debts of the past, a sound strategy also demands resolute leadership, clear accountability and careful planning. Our aim is to balance the demand for electricity with its supply. That mandate means the creation of a new Ontario Power Authority to ensure an adequate and long-term supply. No institution in Ontario currently has that mandate.

Wind energy, as some discuss, is more than just hot air. A member opposite mentions the German experience. I hope those who view wind as a panacea remember that for every 1,000 megawatts of installed generating capacity, experience has shown that some 900 megawatts of backup capacity are needed. Why do you need backup for renewable energy? Because in a cold, dark country like Canada, the sun doesn't shine for half the year and, in Ontario, it's just not very windy.

Ontario is finally moving in the right direction. We're moving forward. We're moving into an area in which our electricity generation will be diversified and augmented by aggressive energy conservation and efficiency measures. Ontarians can look forward to reliable, affordable and safe power, so that Ontario's true asset, its educated and hard-working people, will have the energy they need to build a new era of prosperity for all of us.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I know that the two members just didn't have time to make reference to either the Manitoba deal or conservation, as did their House leader during his two-minute responses, so let me just put on the record those matters right now in case I don't have a chance to do that during my own presentation.

The House leader talked about Manitoba and us cancelling that deal. It's probably worth putting on the record again what Dalton McGuinty had to say about this deal. This is from Hansard, April 30, 1992, and I'm quoting, because this was a question to our Minister of Energy. Dalton McGuinty said, "Does the minister continue to support the Manitoba purchase?"

"We now know it's cheaper to produce this electricity in the province than it is to buy it from Manitoba.... We now know that if we cancel the deal today, it's going to cost us \$82 million, but if we wait until the end of the environmental assessment hearing, it's going to cost us over \$200 million."

He then went on to encourage us to cancel the deal as quickly as humanly possible. The mistake that Bob Rae made was actually listening to Dalton McGuinty, who urged him to cancel this deal. Isn't it regrettable that we took Dalton's advice and did that, because that was the position of the Liberal Party in April 1992.

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Let me just deal with conservation measures. Here is what Dalton McGuinty said on June 2, 1992, about our government's conservation measures: "we ... are struggling under the weight of a recession, the government's policy of conservation is going to cause rates to go up, at least initially." So there was the lack of Dalton's support for our conservation measures.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise proudly to speak on behalf of Hamilton and, in this instance, west Hamilton, where Hamilton Hydro has located one of the first cogeneration situations in Sir John A. Macdonald high school. Hamilton has been a leader in cogeneration, and I rise proudly to support this bill which demonstrates the leadership that's necessary in the electricity field and in the energy field.

Hamilton Hydro, of course, has been working with other organizations, such as Hamilton Health Sciences, to develop a better cogeneration plant for our hospitals in Hamilton. In fact, Art Leitch, who is chairman of the Ontario Energy Association, as well as the CEO for Hamilton Hydro, said that he was very encouraged by the government's balanced approach to this bill. "The minister's pledge to break down current barriers will lead to a greater role," he said, "in energy conservation, distributed generation and alternative energy in closing the gap between Ontario's supply and demand for power."

We as Ontarians have not been strong in the conservation mode, and this bill is going to set an example of the leadership that we as a province must demonstrate in the conservation of energy for the future generations of this wonderful province. I want to pay particular attention to the leadership demonstrated by Hamilton Hydro in their development of this cogeneration, which I believe is going to be a model for the province. It's going to be a model for other communities that can use this excess heat generation to supply warmth to public buildings in the future.

We applaud the government, and we applaud the minister in his leadership in developing this wonderful bill, Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, may I say what a great job you're doing in your role as the assistant Deputy Speaker. We're particularly looking forward to the next few weeks when we'll do the annual rotation of Deputy Speakers that has always happened in the nine years that I have been here. We're looking forward to that. I know the government House leader is looking forward to that as well. That's a common practice here.

I am surprised that none of these members—the government House leader is leaving. I was surprised that in the government House leader's speech he didn't mention—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton knows you can't make reference to the absence of any other member.

Mr Baird: I didn't say he was gone; I said he was leaving. I said he was going to be absent, but he wasn't absent.

I was surprised he didn't make reference to the work that the former Minister of Energy did with respect to Conawapa. If he were to talk to the New Democrat Premier of Manitoba, Gary Doer, if he were to talk to the Minister of Energy or at least the then NDP Minister of Energy, he would acknowledge that it was the former Minister of Energy who really got things going. He should have perhaps mentioned him in his remarks.

I was also surprised that in the speech by the member for Don Valley West she didn't talk about how similar the Liberal energy policy was to the Conservative energy policy. If there were copyright laws on legislation, you guys would be busted. The only difference is they didn't—

Hon Mr Duncan: You're voting for it?

Mr Baird: Well, let's have a vote. You keep putting up speakers to this bill. We'd love to see us voting on it. You are filibustering your own bill, I say to the Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In response to the member, I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker: The minister has sought unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent to do what he asks? I find that there is not unanimous consent. I'll give you a chance to sum up, member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I would also be remiss if I didn't note the presence tonight of the dean of the Legislature and a former Minister of Energy, the member for Lanark-Carleton, who I know has been busy fighting for the Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. We appreciate that he has come back today. Thank goodness we have at least one other member from Ottawa who is prepared to debate and to stand up and defend the Ottawa Hospital, something we haven't seen from members opposite.

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Mr Kormos: Those were such short comments by the two Liberal backbenchers. I'm worried. I want to explain to them that you're permitted 20 minutes when you stand up and take the floor. I know it's not a whole lot of time, but you're permitted 20 minutes to put your views on the record. Your folks who sent you to Queen's Park depend upon your doing that.

Mr Baird: They want their money's worth.

Mr Kormos: They want their money's worth, as Mr Baird says. The folks you represent want to know why you're supporting a particular piece of legislation or why you're opposing a particular piece of legislation or maybe why you simply don't give a tinker's dam about a particular piece of legislation. Maybe, if you're a government backbencher, you want to stand up and explain how it is that you're really not sure what the legislation says or does, but you're doing what the whip tells you to do, which is part of the function, of course, of backbenchers. Mind you, that's not very gratifying to the folks who send you to Queen's Park, because they think you read all this stuff. They think you read the bills and analyze them. They're hard pressed to believe that any more, in view of the paucity of the comments made.

It's a pattern that's repeating itself. It's of some great concern to me. Perhaps the Chair would intervene and use its innate, inherent power here to tune up some of these people and explain to them that a debate consists of more than simply saying, "And me too." "Me too" does not constitute meaningful participation in a debate. Puckering up to the cabinet does not exactly accelerate—notwithstanding the unimaginable interest that the member thinks they're pursuing—does not exactly advance careers.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes questions and comments. I'll now turn to the member for Don Valley West. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms Wynne: I want to thank the members for Nickel Belt, Hamilton West, Nepean-Carleton and Niagara Centre for their comments.

It's a little surprising, when I listen to the member for Nickel Belt and, in fact, the member for Niagara Centre, that the third party would not be supportive of many aspects of this bill. It's interesting, because Jack Gibbons from the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, in his presentation to the committee, said, "The Ontario Clean Air Alliance is a very strong supporter of the creation of the Ontario Power Authority and of most elements of Bill 100. We believe that the proposed Ontario Power Authority is a pragmatic option to help phase out our dirty coal-fired power plants"—which I assume you're supportive of—"and to keep the lights on in the province.... Premier McGuinty and Energy Minister Duncan have repeatedly stated that they want to move Ontario from a culture of waste to a culture of conservation."

That, I would think, is something the third party would be interested in supporting.

Now, the member for Nepean-Carleton talks about this legislation being exactly the same as theirs. Well, I would challenge him. One of the major differences is that we are championing conservation, that we recognize that the culture of waste that exists in this province, which they did not attack, which they did not acknowledge, which they did not move on, is something that we are being aggressive about.

Finally, the member for Niagara Centre attacks us for not speaking to the bill long enough. To paraphrase Mark Twain, if I had longer, I'd have written a shorter speech. If you know what you're going to say, you can say it in fewer words.

I just wanted to put on the record that I believe that after 8:15 the rotations go down to 10 minutes. So in fact the times are shortened.

I thank everyone for their comments and look forward to further debate.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Barrett: I am thankful for the opportunity to speak for 20 minutes. It was a point that was made by the member from Niagara Centre. I have attempted to do a bit of research on this, and I hope I have some information to pass on in the next 20 minutes. I take this fairly seriously.

I would like to begin by quoting what I feel are some of the pertinent sections of Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act. These are sections that apply to the future supply of sustainable energy, reliable electricity and affordable power. My worry is that much of this bill, in my view, threatens affordable electricity. It poses a threat, potentially, for reliable power and may well impede any direction or aspirations for sustainable electricity in the province of Ontario.

There are a number of bullet points in the "Purpose" section of the bill. According to Bill 100, the purposes of the Electricity Restructuring Act include—bear with me, Speaker, I do wish to quote.

"(a) to ensure the adequacy, safety, sustainability and reliability of electricity supply in Ontario through responsible planning and management of electricity resources, supply and demand ...

"(d) to promote the use of cleaner energy sources and technologies, including alternative energy sources and renewable energy sources, in a manner consistent with the policies of the government of Ontario ...

"(f) to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service;

"(g) to promote economic efficiency and sustainability in the generation, transmission, distribution and sale of electricity."

I bring these points to your attention because I submit that much of what I see in this bill runs counter to the Liberals' key energy platform plank, that being the abandonment of the most dependable and the most abundant form of energy that exists in North America today. I would assume everyone here knows the commodity I'm referring to. I speak, of course, to this government's blind rush toward closing down coal-fired energy by 2007.

This commitment is referenced in part II.2 of the act, listed as "Minister's directives." I quote, in part: "The minister may issue, and the OPA shall follow in preparing its integrated power system plans, directives that have been approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council that set out the goals to be achieved during the period to be covered by an integrated power system plan, including goals relating to," and I refer to paragraph (c) "the phasing out of coal-fired generation facilities."

I submit that closure of coal-fired generation runs counter to what the government claims to be the purpose of this act, which I just quoted, in part. To begin with, closing down coal will not ensure the adequacy of power in Ontario, the safety, the sustainability and most certainly the reliability of electricity supply in this great province. I submit there is a grave potential that it will do exactly the opposite.

Currently, Ontario's coal-fired plants provide more than a quarter of our electricity, so if the Liberals carry through with what I consider their ill-conceived, bull-headed, if you will, coal-closure plans by 2007, we have a little over two years in which to replace 25% of our energy supply, something that I feel, quite frankly, is nearly impossible, given the massive dollars, massive amount of time and work that would be required to build up a new energy supply. Therefore, sustainability and reliability of energy supply cannot, with any certainty, be ensured if the coal promise is acted on and, as I submit, will be jeopardized.

I ask that the present government not overlook the fact that coal is both affordable and abundant. We have about a 1,000-year supply globally and about a 300-year supply in North America. There are significant benefits, just to look at the supply side, and again, much of this legislation is concerned with supply.

We can't ignore the fact, and I'll make reference to a petroleum geologist and consultant to the Calgary oil

industry, Andrew Miall, who told an energy symposium recently, and I use his words, "We've tapped virtually all of the natural gas reserves in this continent." Consumption of natural gas continues to rise. He told an Ottawa Citizen reporter, "The problem is that the Canadian public and the government seem to refuse to regard an impending energy shortage as news."

I'll make reference to a statement by a University of British Columbia professor and director of UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning. He indicated, "This is a cold, dark country for much of the year.... We're burning more and finding less,"—he's referring to natural gas—indicating that "production may have peaked already." He went on to say, "The lead time for new energy technologies to make a significant contribution is 20 to 40 years." Speaker, 20 to 40 years. The Liberal coal promise gives us a little over two years.

We've also heard from a Bruce Power chief executive officer, Duncan Hawthorne, who says that all our nuclear generating units in Ontario will have reached the end of their normal operating lives by the year 2018. He went on to say that any plan to build a nuclear plant would have to be implemented immediately to be ready on time for the looming energy crunch that I referred to previously. That's an energy crunch that will crunch all of us, essentially, in the wake of any immediate coal-fired phase out implementation program.

Interesting facts: Natural gas, just to summarize, may have already reached its peak. There is evidence that supplies are dwindling. Our nuclear power is aging quickly. Current facilities have about 15 years left. Coal: As I said, we've got about 1,000 years of coal.

These concerns are borne out by the final report of the government's Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force. I bring your attention to the task force concern that, "The potential economic impact of a major increase in dependence on natural gas-fired generation is magnified by the ongoing volatility in gas prices." Secondly, there is a "growing concern about the availability of affordable natural gas supplies over the next 10 years." Again, supply is related to price. There is no question there is an economic argument to be made, and this bill, in its purposes, certainly makes reference to the economic argument and the fact that we are responsible to the consumers of power in Ontario.

So I caution this government. If they are looking to natural gas to be the major player to replace coal, they'd better keep on looking, because supply is not reliable; it is dwindling. It is not sustainable, and as demand increases, and the supply decreases, as we're told, obviously that has an impact on price. Price will skyrocket, obliterating this government's commitment "to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service."

Just over the last five years, gas prices have seen steep increases of something in the order of 200%. Again, much of the increase is due to the lack of known gas reserves. According to the US Department of Energy, of North America's proven hydrocarbon reserves, coal represents 85% and natural gas 10%.

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Concerns over the cost and the supply of natural gas versus coal are well-documented in a brief by the Power Workers' Union. I made reference to this brief earlier this evening. The Power Workers' Union is an organization very familiar in a hands-on way with the ins and outs of power production. I made reference earlier to their brief. It is titled *The Role of Coal*. The union advocates a rapid commercialization of new, clean coal technology and supports the installation and the continued installation on our coal-powered electricity generating stations of SCRs. SCR stands for the selective catalytic reduction units. They take out most of the nitrous oxide in emissions. The union's argument also covers cost and supply as well as the environmental concerns, as I recently mentioned, of nitrogen.

To begin with, the union maintains that coal-fired electricity costs are about half that of natural gas. Again, if natural gas is being touted as the most likely fuel candidate for any conversion of a coal plant, its price will necessarily increase as the demand increases. In fact, the Power Workers' Union maintains that a wholesale switch to natural gas from coal would drive up electricity costs, not only for consumers but for businesses, something in the order of 15%. Here again is that relationship between price, supply and demand, which we can assume will remain constant. If we look at the last eight years of Conservative rule, we can assume that the demand will continue to grow based on the economic growth that resulted over the last eight years of our government.

In regard to the promotion of, and I quote from the bill, "the use of cleaner energy sources and technologies," there is a potential here for clean coal in achieving this goal. This is a potential that, it seems to me, is being completely ignored by the Liberal rush to close down the coal plants. What's also being ignored is a clear recommendation from the energy supply task force for the consideration of clean coal technologies.

The task force report stated, "The government should quickly develop generation, transmission and conservation alternatives"—and I put emphasis on this last phrase—"including clean coal technologies."

That's exactly the type of thinking our Ontario PC government promoted with the investment of \$250 million in both the Lambton coal-fired plant and the Nanticoke plant with respect to the selective catalytic reduction units. I have invited the Minister of Energy to come down to Nanticoke in my riding to take a look. I think I extended the invitation seven or eight months ago, and his staff indicated that perhaps he could come down this fall. It's hard to miss. This selective catalytic reduction unit is something like 200 feet high, and it's working. It takes out the nitrous oxide.

Once fully operational, emissions between the two plants—this is both Lambton and Nanticoke—are dropping by 80% on those units to which they have been constructed. If you put the two plants together, it works out to a reduction of about 12,000 tonnes of nitrous oxide. That's the same as taking about 600,000 cars off the road.

I can tell you that investment in clean coal technology and other initiatives, of course, is money well spent. In fact, according to a recent report—this is a local report in my riding covering the Nanticoke Industrial Park; not only OPG, but also the very large and modern Esso refinery and Stelco steel. According to this report, published by the Nanticoke Environmental Committee, cleaner coal technologies and other emission reduction efforts in the Nanticoke area have dropped: first of all, sulphur dioxide levels by 60% since 1984; and, secondly, nitrogen dioxide levels by 50% since 1984. I feel those are significant numbers. That's a good trend, and it bears out the potential of what can be achieved through technology and, in part and more specifically, through the continual striving with respect to cleaning up coal.

I want to point out that this is the kind of forward thinking, if you will, that we're seeing presently in the George Bush campaign during the federal election south of the border.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: I haven't even said what it is, and I hear some comments. I couldn't tell whether it was snickering or sniggering. George Bush—

Mr Kormos: I'm a Nader guy.

Mr Barrett: I think he's running in Ontario too.

He has a platform with respect to clean coal technology. It commits the President of the United States to:

(1) Develop clean-coal technology. President Bush will continue his commitment to provide \$2 billion over 10 years to develop clean coal technologies.

(2) Promote markets for clean coal technology. President Bush has indicated he'll implement a market-based approach—why am I not surprised?—to cutting air pollution that will create nearly \$50 billion in technology and services market for clean coal, rather than forcing a shift to other fuels, to meet the US air standards.

(3) Pursue what is referred to as the FutureGen initiative. George Bush will lead an international public-private partnership to create—get this—the world's first zero-emissions coal-based power plant, producing electricity and hydrogen while capturing carbon dioxide. This is coming from the President of the United States, who did not sign on to Kyoto but has certainly taken on the mantle of an environmentalist and is certainly fulfilling the goals and the main purpose of the Kyoto accord. What a guy.

If this can be done by George Bush and our neighbours to the south—

Mr Kormos: This is George W. Bush.

Mr Barrett: —it is—perhaps we are putting our heads in the sand, we in this cold, dark country of Canada.

It brings me to the fact that while the President of the United States is committing to future clean coal technology, the current power picture in the States—and I will be critical of what's going on down there, of course. We live downwind from something in the order of 200, by and large, dirty coal-fired plants—cheap coal, accessible coal, high-sulphur coal, that West Virginia coal. That kind of coal that used to be burned at

Nanticoke has now been replaced by low-sulphur western coal. We heard reference earlier this evening from the NDP member for Beaches-Woodbine, who talked of the common airshed. US plants account for over 50% of the smog that comes into the province of Ontario. Again, I join the initiative from disparate groups like those that surround President George Bush, those who work with the Ontario Power Workers' Union to continue to strive and to find a better alternative.

I began by making reference to the purposes of the act. I'm concerned that this bill will jeopardize the adequacy, the sustainability, the reliability of our electricity in the province of Ontario. It obviously ignores the possibility of clean coal as being “a cleaner energy source and technology.” I would position that this disregards the interests of consumers, certainly with respect to prices—that's a worry of mine—and with respect to the reliability and quality of service.

If these amendments were made, this proposed legislation would perhaps be a little more truthful, if we could inculcate some of that phraseology in this legislation.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I want to point out to members here, now that was a speech. That was 20 minutes, a pretty compressed period of time, used by the member to articulate, to express, his views on behalf of his constituents about the broader electricity issue and about this bill. It demonstrated an interest in the subject, it demonstrated familiarity with the subject, it demonstrated some independent thinking and research.

Mind you, gosh, you've got the American election happening and you've got rock stars and columnists and PBS television hosts trying to influence the outcome of the American presidential election. I can't wait to get on the Web site, on the Internet, tomorrow morning and call up the Washington Post and see the headline, “George W. Bush Lauded in Provincial Legislature by Opposition Member Toby Barrett.” CNN will be keeping his wife and kids awake all night with the camera crews parked outside his house.

As a matter of fact, I was with some friends of his from Delhi, some people from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church down in Welland, who spoke about this member showing up at the Hungarian hall, very impressed with the fact that he wandered right into the kitchen, right to where the source was. I said, “Did you make sure you fed him well? You fed him Hungarian, you fed him Magyar?” They assured me that they did and that Mr Barrett was not only well taken care of, but very gracious. I told them I was pleased that he had been so demonstrative toward the Hungarian community.

But see, that was a speech. That was 20 minutes, not a whole lot of time. We used to be able to speak longer. Mr Sterling remembers that. That was a speech. That's what people expect of you. That's what you're paid the big bucks to do.

I've heard from Mr Barrett in the Conservative caucus; now I'm looking forward to hearing from some of the Liberal backbenchers in the same manner.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I just want to commend our Minister of Energy for this forward-looking piece of legislation. I want to quote from Ron Stewart—not the great football player of Rough Rider fame, but the present CEO of Hydro Ottawa. He said, in a letter to the editor to the Ottawa Citizen, April 21, of 2004:

“To set the record straight, Hydro Ottawa fully supports the government’s initiatives to spur on energy conservation in Ontario. Practically speaking, we believe that smart meters make sense as one among many different aspects of the solution in driving forward with energy conservation as a public policy priority. Without a smart-metering approach, neither utilities nor customers would have the tools to monitor their energy consumption—which is a requirement for assisting people in adapting their usage patterns to conserve energy and save money by doing so.” This is Ron Stewart—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Will the member from Nepean-Carleton please refrain from heckling as loudly as he’s doing? I can’t hear the minister.

Hon Mr Watson: I hope I’ll get a few extra seconds, because the junior member from Nepean—we have obviously hit a raw nerve, because he has some explaining to do. Let me quote from a great Nepeanite, Dr Robert Morris, an engineer who said:

“On January 29, then Energy Minister Baird responded to critics who claimed that the cap could drain provincial coffers by as much as \$800 million ... that ‘the cost of fixing Ontario’s electricity price at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour will not be paid for by the province’s taxpayers.... We’re confident the plan will pay for itself.’”

Obviously, that was not the case. It was over \$1 billion in subsidies. This is why we’re here with Bill 100. Ron Stewart, the president and CEO of Hydro Ottawa is very much supportive of this strategy of energy conservation, and we very much look forward to the opposition seeing the light—because there are lights on now in Ontario—and supporting this legislation.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It really is laughable that the member from Ottawa West—whatever talks about the integrity of Ottawa Hydro, when all of the board was just recently fired. This is an organization that became the mouthpiece for the Liberal mayor of the city of Ottawa, and anything that comes from Ottawa Hydro can be taken as nothing more than back-patting from a former Liberal MPP in this area. The credibility of that organization is nil in the city of Ottawa; it should be nil here as well.

Interjections.

Mr Sterling: I want to talk about Mr Barrett’s speech. I watched this Legislature and I watched the people who were listening to this particular speech because it was well-prepared. There were lots of facts in it. Mr Barrett has done his homework on this matter. He brought forward a point of view and backed it up with facts. He talked about reality. He talked about what experts had said. Yet I couldn’t find a Liberal in this Legislature who

was listening to this speech. I looked around at each and every Liberal member, and they were conversing, writing or reading. They were not paying attention to what I consider was an excellent representation of the facts with regard to what the energy situation is in this province. They are disinterested in finding out what the real facts are. You should read Mr Barrett’s speech and learn something about energy in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: There is time for one last question and comment. I ask all members to refrain from heckling during questions and comments, including the Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Ms Martel: I want to commend the member for the comments he made here this evening. He took a lot of time—that was clear—in preparing the remarks. It wasn’t one of those stock speeches that Liberal members get handed to them when they show up in this place and are told to read. It was very clear that he brought with him some of the experiences he had gotten through the committee process and, frankly, a lot of his own work that he has done looking into this issue, so I appreciated what he had to say. I’m not sure I agreed with everything, particularly the reference to George W. Bush, but that’s another matter.

I just want to say to him that probably a truer word was never spoken here this evening. It wasn’t actually spoken by him, it was spoken by his colleague Mr Baird, who is going to speak here this evening, who said the Liberal energy/electricity policy is the same as the Conservatives’. A truer word was never spoken here this evening. That’s exactly the point, and that’s exactly why I was not prepared to give unanimous consent this evening for second and third reading. Why would I do that? I’m totally opposed to this bill. I’m not jumping in bed with the Liberals or the Tories on this energy policy. I’m here to support public power. I’m not here to support private power all the time, which is what Bill 100 is all about. So no, I’m not going to give unanimous consent.

I’m going to speak next, and I’m going to use my 20 minutes. I can assure you that it wasn’t crafted by anyone in NDP research, and you’ll probably see that when you hear me speak. I’m going to use my time, and we’ve got some other people in the building who are quite prepared to speak as well. I just wish the Liberals, because they’re so excited about this bill, so enthusiastic and so supportive, would each get up and use their 20 minutes instead of having to split it between two people, because even two people can’t get up enough get-go to actually use the whole 20 minutes.

So I want to commend the member who used his time tonight. Obviously it wasn’t a stock speech. I’m not sure that I agreed with everything, but thank you for contributing to the process here this evening.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: I have to thank the members opposite. You’re too kind. I will say I find this difficult, and I have excellent staff who dig up some of the data. Thanks to the Power Workers’ Union and thanks to those researchers who work for George W.

The member for Niagara Centre made reference to the Hungarian community in the Delhi area. During Harvest-fest, which is something that occurs at the end of the tobacco season, Reverend Kántor, a former politician in the United States, with the Presbyterian Church, which is one of the main churches for the Hungarian community in Delhi—I had the honour of joining the ladies in the kitchen. It took me nine years. They allowed me to come into the kitchen and sit down and have chicken soup and cabbage rolls. To do that, I spent most of the afternoon serving coleslaw at the hall. That truly was an honour.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate comments from Liberal members opposite, members who were recently accused of not listening to some of my remarks; I heard reference there. Whether they are seeing the light or not, I do take a very strong position against some of the work being done by the government with respect to electricity and I am concerned that the light we may be seeing is the light at the front of the train engine. I suggest that you hang on to your hats. As far as consumers—in your legislation you make reference to the protection of consumers—I suggest, hang on to your wallets.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Martel: I hope they are all this enthusiastic by the time I finish. Let me start with the quote by Mr Baird that the Liberal energy policy, or Liberal electricity policy, is the same as the Conservatives'. He is absolutely right. Do you know what? Even if I hadn't read the bill, that would have been good enough for me to oppose it, because that is exactly what the policy of the Liberal Party has been, with the flip-flops in between.

I remember, for example, when the Conservatives wanted to look at privatizing the hydro grid, the transmission lines. There was poor Dalton, who was caught on tape, although he denied it. He was caught on tape and had to admit later on that he was there telling the public that was OK; as long as there was a debate in the Legislature about the privatization of the transmission line, that was OK by him and the Liberal Party. But two months later, when it became very clear that the public was not very supportive of privatization of the hydro grid, didn't Mr McGuinty and company do a bit of a flip and a flop? All of a sudden they were opposed to the privatization, to the sell-off of the transmission lines in Ontario. They've been very consistent being on both sides of this private-public power issue.

I don't have my quotes here tonight; I regret that. We have some marvellous quotes by one Mr McGuinty when he was in opposition and one Mr Conway when he was the energy critic, talking about how the Liberal Party oh so supported competition in the electricity marketplace. I remember there was a letter that was issued by the Liberal Party, a fundraising letter to the major power producers in the province and major energy companies. That letter essentially said—it was dated October, I'm going to say 2002; it might be 2001, but I still think it's 2002. It was an invitation to all of them to attend a big

fundraising dinner. The most important quote in that letter was that Dalton and the Ontario Liberal Party have been consistent supporters of deregulated, private hydro in Ontario. It said to send your cheque for—was it \$300? The next year it got even bigger. It said to send your cheque for \$300, and you can attend dinner with Dalton and you can hear all about the Ontario Liberal Party policy of support of private, deregulated electricity in Ontario.

There were a lot of quotes after that by Mr McGuinty and a lot more by Mr Conway. It is important to note that the Liberal Party supported the Conservatives' bill on deregulation and privatization of hydro on second reading. I am not sure what finally changed their mind on third reading. Maybe they read some polls, maybe they got a clear understanding that people weren't so excited about private power all of the time and the cost to Ontario consumers that came with that. Anyway, on third reading, they flopped again or flipped again and went from support on second reading to opposition on third.

What was interesting about that letter I was telling you about, where Dalton McGuinty said he and the Liberal Party had been consistent supporters of deregulated, privatized hydro in Ontario, is that it went out on the very same day that the Conservative government had to bring in their price cap to put a lid on hydro rates that had gone through the roof as a result of market opening. It was so interesting to have the Liberals supportive on second reading of private hydro and then against on third reading and then sending out a letter to all their financial friends asking them for money because they were consistent supporters of private hydro. On the same day the letter went out, there was the Conservative government at the time bringing in the legislation to put a cap on hydro rates, because of course private hydro didn't work in Ontario. It didn't work in Alberta, it didn't work in Britain, it didn't work in any other jurisdiction it was tried in—

Interjection: California.

Ms Martel: —California in particular. What a disaster that was.

But the Conservatives thought that maybe in Ontario it might work; apparently so did the Tories. There they were, the former government, having to bring in a cap because, contrary to what we had been told, rates didn't go down; they went through the roof. All of us who were members at the time can recall the phone calls we got to our offices starting in June, July, September, after the market opened, from people frantic with their hydro bills—farmers, small businesses, people on social assistance, seniors on fixed incomes. It was so bad that the Conservatives were forced to bring in the price cap, which was clear evidence for me, for one, that the competitive market in electricity didn't work and we would have been better to abandon it at that point and bring back public power, power at cost, than we were to put in an artificial price cap, which just keeps the high price of hydro down for some consumers but through the tax system forces us to continue to subsidize the high

cost of power we are paying to those people putting it into the grid.

But the Liberal policy has been flip and flop and flop and flip. It was interesting that during the last election campaign the Liberals said very clearly that their position on electricity now was that they supported not-for-profit, public generation of new supply. That was their commitment to the Ontario public.

Here we are this evening, dealing with a bill that is completely contrary to that promise—yet another broken Liberal promise. First was the rate cap. You will remember, Speaker, as a candidate in the last election, that your Liberal candidate said very clearly that a Liberal government would continue the Conservative price cap in place until 2006. That was their commitment. I heard that at more than one all-candidates' debate. They were going to keep it in place until 2006.

The first thing that happens—there we are last fall. My goodness, we probably haven't even sat two weeks, and here come the Liberals with another broken promise: "Oh, we can't keep the rate cap in place because it is costing Ontario taxpayers so much money." As if they didn't know we were subsidizing the cost of power before. Of course everyone knew that. There were many articles in the newspaper, in particular in August just before the election, very clearly making the point that Ontario had already at that point—by August 2003—subsidized private power to the tune of about \$800 million, coming out of your pocket and mine to subsidize private power.

So it was a little silly for the Liberals to try to say in this House, even though they did, that they just didn't know how expensive the subsidy was and we just couldn't afford that subsidy any more. But it was OK during the election campaign to make the promise to try to buy people's votes.

There we were last fall. One of the first pieces of legislation was a broken promise by the Liberal government, because of course they weren't keeping the Conservative rate cap in place until 2006. No, the rate cap has gone up, and consumers in Ontario are paying more for electricity as a result. Industrial consumers in Ontario are going to pay a whole lot more once Bill 100 is passed. That is what I want to deal with tonight.

I want to deal with just one presentation that was made to the committee, because I thought it was a most interesting and most important one from the perspective of the community that I represent and many other communities, particularly in northern Ontario, although it obviously has an impact in southern Ontario too. This was a presentation that was made by the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario to the legislative committee on Bill 100. They made this presentation on August 12, 2004. There was Mike Kuriychuk from Bowater, Darren MacDonald from Ameristeel and George Blechta from Falconbridge. They were representing the major power users in the province.

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They began their presentation by talking about how important electricity is to Ontario's economy because, of

course, manufacturing is extremely important to Ontario's economy, both in terms of employment and in terms of trade. They said that this "is an industrial economy," and the "energy strategy must include that reality"—emphasis on the word "reality"—"and vision." Jobs in this sector generally pay more than in the service sector or tourism, and that's absolutely true. They said very clearly that Ontario is losing its competitive advantage, and that was a direct reference to the high cost of private power that they are already paying as a result of the Conservative government's opening of the electricity market. So it wasn't New Democrats talking about the high cost of power and Ontario losing its competitive advantage; no, it was the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario.

They included a chart, which I know you can't see, Speaker, but if you want to get a copy of it, you'll have a chance to peruse it then. But it's a very interesting chart. The source was the plant costs from Canadian representatives of companies operating in the US and Canada, so a representative looked at power costs for some of their competitors, frankly, in the same industry, but also their own costs as well. Figure 2 said, "Many Ontario plants face significantly higher electricity costs than their US counterparts." That's been one of the so-called benefits, I guess, of private power, that we're now paying more, in terms of the companies in Ontario, than many US counterparts.

The graph is interesting because it shows Manitoba with public power, the lowest-cost jurisdiction with respect to electricity rates. Then into the middle of the graph you've got British Columbia and Quebec, also two other jurisdictions that have public power, power provided at cost. And then we've got Ontario. This is after the opening of the market, after deregulation and privatization. Ontario is up there with Alberta, which also has private deregulated power, New Jersey and Illinois. In fact, Ontario was the fourth highest jurisdiction in terms of electricity costs for many of these major industrial users. I say again, there is one of the very negative consequences of private power. You just have to look at the graph and see where those jurisdictions are that have public power, and see that they are able to offer much lower rates than most other American jurisdictions to their manufacturing sector.

Let me just quickly go through the individual presentations. The first was made by Bowater. Bowater is a significant employer in the province of Ontario. They were speaking generally for the forestry sector. They reminded the committee that "285 Ontario communities depend on the forest sector" and "of those, 70 are moderately to highly dependent," meaning that if those industries go down, there isn't anything else in the community to sustain that community. We know that well in northern Ontario. Most are in northwestern and northeastern Ontario, and there are also many First Nations who are closely related to that employment who could lose their jobs as well, given high power prices. The direct employment in Ontario: 85,000 people in the forestry sector. Indirect: about 175,000. Exports: \$9 billion.

What did they say about power? "Electricity is a significant percentage of the cost of production. Depending on the technology," it "can be greater than 25% of product cost." It's often a cost that is only second to the cost of the raw fibre itself to put through the mill. And they said—not me, but Bowater—very clearly: "In Ontario, electricity costs have already escalated out of control." That's under the private power scheme we already have. Imagine what it's going to be like when electricity generation is all private, all the time, with the high costs associated with that.

They made it very clear that any industry that could have adjusted, could work at peak hours, could look to other sources of electricity, had already done that, and there were not many other options for those who were still continuing to operate. They also made it clear that production is just moving somewhere else, and they talked about two plants in northwestern Ontario and Kenora that have already closed as a result of the private power scheme we have in the province right now.

The next presentation was made by the steel industry, Gerda Ameristeel Corp. They have an operation here in the province of Ontario. Their investment in the province since 1990 is \$313 million. They made it very clear that when they look at electricity costs, Ontario is a very high-cost operation for them because of private power. They said very clearly that they are not able to keep pace with power price increases of 30%, and they think that as a result of the passage of Bill 100, their electricity costs are going to rise between 30% and 50%. They said very clearly to the committee, "That's a signal to us that we don't need to invest in Ontario, that we would be much better to invest somewhere else because those costs are far too high. We're going to go to a jurisdiction that is electricity-friendly, where the costs are far lower."

Thirdly, the mining industry, and the presentation there was made by George Blechta, who is a representative of Falconbridge. This one is quite important to me because, of course, they have about 1,600 workers in Falconbridge in the city of Sudbury. There are another few hundred thousand located as well in Timmins with the operations there. Falconbridge had a total of about 3,000 employees between the two operations in Timmins and Sudbury.

Falconbridge made it very clear to the committee what their operating costs are. Their smelter operating costs, in terms of electricity: 25% to 30% of their overall costs at the smelter. In the mines, it's about 10% to 15% of their overall costs to run their operations. Their average yearly cost for electricity is \$120 million, which is extremely high and extremely important because if there is any fluctuation, that certainly has an impact on their decision to do further development.

They said to the committee that for every \$1 megawatt increase in the year, "Our costs" as a company "are increased by \$2 million." That sets the tone for them in terms of decisions they will make about investment and decisions they will make in terms of development. They made it very clear that this was a significant part of their

operating costs as an operation and, if the bill went through in its current form, they would find it extremely difficult to meet the new, higher power costs that they fully anticipate will come with this bill.

Let me just deal with what they said overall in terms of the anticipated increases in hydro with the bill and the potential job loss, because I thought this was very interesting. Let me repeat again, this is the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, no friends of the NDP, no reason for them to be talking to us about public power, but they clearly have very serious concerns about this bill. They said, "Without mitigation measures these decisions" in the bill "could increase Ontario electricity prices between 30% and 53%." Their 53% projected delivery cost was estimated to occur in 2008.

They said the economic impact would be as follows: "For the Ontario economy, this will mean slower growth (a drop of up to 1.4% in GDP) and lower employment (a loss of up to 140,000 jobs) compared to a scenario without the power price increases." I remind you again, that was the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario estimating that, through this bill, we will see hydro rates increase between 30% and 53%, with a loss of up to 140,000 jobs in the steel industry, in the forestry sector and in mining.

That'll have a significant impact in my part of the world, in my community, where our major employers continue to be Falconbridge and Inco—Inco with probably 4,000 people who still work there—a significant impact in Timmins, a significant impact in Sault Ste Marie, a significant impact in every pulp and paper community across northeastern Ontario, and there's a whole lot of them from Thunder Bay to Fort Frances to Dryden to Kenora. I'll bet half of those 140,000 jobs lost would be in northern Ontario alone, between those who work in mining and those who work in forestry. And that is not a consequence that I'm prepared to contemplate, and that's exactly why I am not supporting this bill.

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We did a press conference in Sudbury on September 17 with representatives from the two unions, Mine Mill CAW, represented by Rick Grylls, and John Fera of USWA local 6500. Both of those representatives were very clear that if these were the kinds of costs that Inco and Falconbridge were facing in terms of increased power costs, that would directly impact their negotiations with the company, because the company would come to them and say, "We can't offer something better for the pension, and we can't offer something better in terms of wages and salaries or benefits, because we've got to deal with hydro costs." So it would first have a negative impact in terms of negotiations, and a much more serious impact if those companies or others like them decided to downscale their production or end it entirely because of high hydro costs.

In conclusion: All private all of the time? Well, this bill is going to have very, very significant negative impacts on industry in the province of Ontario: in northeastern Ontario and northwestern Ontario and in those

areas in southern Ontario with a high manufacturing base. We can't afford to lose 140,000 jobs because of high electricity costs.

This bill is wrong. We should be dealing with a bill that brings back public power provided at cost, because that's the only way we're going to retain and increase jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I listened intently to the member from Nickel Belt, and I would like to speak to the issue of costs. Whether power is generated publicly or privately, our experience is that costs are increasing, and if you subsidize the costs, the dollars have to be parked somewhere.

We know what's happened over the past number of decades. The debt load is on the backs of the taxpayers. If we continue the same process ad infinitum, although we may be subsidizing the cost to the consumer—the large users or small users—the cost ends up being a debt load on taxpayers that is a burden we can't continue to sustain in the long run.

I haven't heard or seen anywhere, in listening to the minister recently in estimates committee, talk about private hydro all the time, every time. What I've heard is that there are opportunities for a blend in the system, where public power will continue, both our current base load and, on an ongoing basis, an opportunity for innovation in private sector initiatives, an opportunity for cost efficiencies in the private sector and a means of establishing a level of reliability that has been lacking.

I go back in my own limited experience in the municipal sector. I can take us back 10 or 12 years, when I began to see a real decline in our base supply in the operation of Pickering nuclear, as an example. That decline continued throughout the 1990s and into the early part of this particular time frame. I think we need to be looking at options and alternatives for power supply in addition to the sole public supply, but also a blend with private opportunity.

Mr Barrett: I also had a great deal of interest in the presentation by the member from Nickel Belt. I listened with great interest to her description of the importance for primary industry in the north, the source of much of our wealth in the province of Ontario, and her concern with not only the supply of power, the supply of energy, the supply of electricity, but with the price. The price is crucial.

She made reference to the thousands of people who work in primary industry in towns like Sudbury and Timmins, people who work in the mining and smelting industry and the forestry industry, working for companies like Inco and Falconbridge—primary industry, much like agriculture in southern Ontario.

In my area, I made reference to Stelco and Esso and their reliance and dependence as well upon the supply of power and their reliance on affordable energy, and there is concern. We share the concern of industry to have an adequate price relationship. Stelco, down in Nanticoke,

has power towers that come directly from the Nanticoke plant about a quarter of a mile away. My concern is that this bill jeopardizes the reliability and sustainability of electricity, in contrast to the intent, in contrast to what it is touted to do. My concern is that there is a disregard for primary industry and the very heavy users of electricity in the province as far as price is concerned.

Ms Churley: I'm always interested in speeches by the member for Nickel Belt and always very impressed with her preparation. You will note she has her file with all the little stickies on it.

Mr Kormos: That was a speech.

Ms Churley: Yes, it was her very own speech, as she pointed out.

She always talks about how government legislation is going to impact her own community. It's important that all the Liberal members who are prepared to vote for this bill understand the huge negative impact it's going to have on jobs in her community, across the north and in the south.

She talked about broken promises, and if I had time I'd talk about a lot more broken Liberal promises. We are concentrating tonight on the hydro rate cap and keeping hydro public.

One of the things I'm sure she would have talked about, if she had time, was the government's pathetic attempt to try to deal with low-income people, whose rates are going through the roof. The government finally came to my riding—I don't think they knew they were going to end up in my riding, and I showed up—to announce they were putting \$2 million into a fund to help low-income families pay their increased hydro bills. What did we find out a few weeks ago? I don't know if you know about this, but those low-income people don't get a penny of that. That measly \$2 million is going straight into the pockets of the providers for rehooking up the energy they cut if low-income people haven't paid their bills. Think about it: You're low-income and they cut off your hydro because you can't afford to pay your bill, and this measly \$2 million goes into the pockets of the providers to go back in and hook it up. That is where that measly \$2 million is going. It's not going to help those people pay their bills to prevent the heat from being cut off in the first place.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Hon Mr Watson: I found it passing ironic that the member for Lanark-Carleton, in his comments, ranted and raved about Glen Shortliffe, the chair of Hydro. If you recall—I know my friend the municipal affairs minister remembers—it was the Tories who created Glen Shortliffe, and Glen Shortliffe amalgamated against the will of some of those Tory members.

The member for Lanark-Carleton is also a former consumer minister. Let me quote from Joan Huzar, president of the Consumers Council of Canada: "The Consumers Council of Canada applauds energy minister Dwight Duncan's announcement that he intends to bring a measure of sanity to the chaos of Ontario's electricity

marketplace. Establishing a new Ontario Power Authority to oversee Ontario electricity well-being is a splendid idea and we are encouraged by the announcement that the air we all breathe will benefit as coal-fired generation will be phased out within a few years. We are equally pleased that the Liberal government will get serious about energy conservation and bring in programs to help householders manage their electricity use." That was a letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star* on April 21, 2004.

Joan Huzar is a member of my ministerial advisory committee on consumer issues. We welcome her advice and her counsel, and we welcome the support of the Consumers Council of Canada. They have actually read the bill and understand this is going to be good for consumers because it is going to bring stability to the electricity market, something the other side doesn't know a thing about.

I also take exception to Mr Sterling's attack on the integrity of Ron Stewart, a public servant of—

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): A great football player.

Hon Mr Watson: He's not the football player, but I can tell you he's a great member of the Ottawa Hydro team—he's the president and CEO—and supports the initiative of this government. That's good enough reference for me: the consumers' council and Ottawa Hydro.

2040

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your intervention.

The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: If people want to see what the benefits of public power are, you just have to go to page 10 of the brief that was done by this association, who are not New Democrats by any stretch of the imagination. It says very clearly: "Many Ontario plants face significantly higher electricity costs than their US counterparts." The lowest-priced jurisdiction is Manitoba, with public power. In the middle of the grid are British Columbia and Quebec together, with public power. Who is over there on the end with the highest cost? The highest cost is Alberta with private power, and the fourth-highest cost is now Ontario as a result of the privatization and deregulation of power in this province too.

This graph was not put together by New Democrats. It says, "Source: plant costs from Canadian representatives of companies operating in the US and Canada." Take a look at the graph and see where we are and see what that means now for industry when we are operating with public power, where all the profit-takers and fee-seekers and everybody else who wants to get their hands into your pocket is there, and what those jurisdictions that offer public power, that have not-for-profit utilities, are able to offer. The difference is enormous.

Let me point out again that these folks are no friends of the NDP. They are not. These are people who supported full-fledged competition as fast and as far as the Conservative government could have gone. The Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario came

to the committee and said, "If Bill 100 passes, we can anticipate hydro increases of 30% to 53% by 2008, and the loss of 140,000 jobs in the province of Ontario." Think about what that means to the province: in my community and many others. Think about what that means to the economy. Think about it and withdraw this bill. Bring back public power.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate. I'll be speaking for five minutes. That may upset some people in the House, but certainly I don't think it will upset the people who are watching. Since I've been here, it is amazing how you can tell the people who have spent time on school boards and on councils. Like the previous speaker, the member for Don Valley West, said, if you can't say something in five minutes, you've got nothing to say. Somebody has yet to come up to me and say, "Do you know what? I loved that 30 minutes of ragging the puck you did for us on behalf of the opposition party," or the government or whichever side.

It's no wonder we're speaking about a bill like this today. In a modern Canadian economy, we know how important a secure and affordable energy supply is. It's something we simply can't ignore.

When we talk about economic expansion in the province, when we talk about some of the industries we're trying to attract—you talk to the auto sector, the steel sector—what they want to know more than anything else these days is if the supply of energy is secure and affordable, and something they can count on. Industry needs confidence that this province has a secure and affordable supply of electricity, and the people, as a result of the blackout we had in the previous summer, need confidence that that simply will not happen again.

We learned a lot from that blackout. Things like medical equipment were failing; traffic control was a problem. Things we never thought we would have to deal with needed to be dealt with as a result of that blackout.

I have a refinery in my riding, the Petro-Canada refinery. Anybody who knows anything about the refining process knows that when those industries are either coming up to peak power or going down, that is when the deaths occur, that's when the injuries happen, that's when the accidents happen. An industry of that scale in a community like mine, which is primarily residential, simply needs to know that it can rely on a secure supply of electricity.

What we're doing here, in my opinion, is charting some new ground. I think we're moving forward in a very responsible way. All parties have had a go at this. All parties have tried to make Ontario Hydro work. All parties, I think, have tried their hardest. I think they were sincere. In hindsight, some of the moves that were made were perhaps a little bizarre. You take a look at when the NDP was in power. I still can't figure out the rainforest thing. People tell me that there was a rainforest bought that has since been sold. I have no idea what the idea was behind that, but certainly it is something that gets raised

from time to time. I think when you look at the previous government—talk about no confidence. The moves made by the previous government, with the on-again, off-again—

Hon Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 100.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Energy has sought unanimous consent to give second and third reading—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The minister has sought unanimous consent. I heard a no. I'll return—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'll return to the member for Oakville.

Mr Flynn: I was looking forward to the vote as much as anybody, but I certainly will continue.

We know we need a combination of private sector and public sector in order to make the electricity supply work in Ontario. We know that it's got to be a system that we can rely on. I think what we presented is a plan that will find approval with the people of Ontario, because they know how important this is.

It's not just about generating raw power in the province. We're also introducing a power authority, we're introducing what's called a conservation bureau, we're going to have a chief energy conservation officer, and we're going to plan and coordinate energy conservation measures. We're hoping that's going to help the average consumer in the province to be able to save not only energy, but money.

We're going to be able to, as a result of this, have a reliable, sustainable energy supply. It's going to be at stable, competitive prices. It's something we need. It's something this province simply cannot exist without.

I've heard the ideas that have been raised by the opposition parties. I don't see anything of any substance. What I would like us to do, as has been suggested by at least two parties in the House, is to hold the vote tonight and to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech by my friend from Oakville. I was surprised, because we adopted, Speaker, as you will know, these—

Interjection: Your collar.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): Tuck your shirt in.

Mr Baird: The fashion police from Timiskaming over there. The fashion police from Timiskaming and Sudbury and Scarborough over there.

We changed the standing orders some years ago and said we would go down to 10-minute speeches after a period of time. The complaints from the Liberal members—you couldn't speak in 10 minutes. This Liberal member only speaks for five minutes, which is a surprise.

I wondered why the member opposite didn't talk about the election campaign commitment that he made to the

people of Oakville, and that was to provide for a fixed price for electricity at 4.3 cents. He didn't mention that.

That was something that Dalton McGuinty endorsed. That is something that Dalton McGuinty said was a good idea, and he got up and voted for it once, twice, three times, four times, including the time it came back from committee. With Dalton McGuinty, you never know what side of the issue—Dalton McGuinty has some of the best policy debates with himself, and I am surprised the member for Oakville wouldn't have mentioned that, or wouldn't have mentioned that so much of the energy policy brought in by this government is in fact the Conservative energy policy. The idea of Conawapa—where did that come from? It came from the Eves government. Where did these conservation ideas come from? They came from when the former minister, who was much more capable, was there doing good things.

2050

Mr Kormos: These five minutes make me reflect upon the member for Nickel Belt and her 20 minutes of intelligent, rational participation in this debate. There should be some concern about members of this assembly who somehow—as to the argument that you don't need more than five minutes to say what has to be said, I beg you to take a look at some of the learned and skilled analyses and observations that have been recorded over the course of now thousands of years.

I appreciate that it's difficult to have to read the material. It's difficult to have to follow the issue. It takes a little bit of time. It's difficult sometimes, especially when you first come here, to get on your feet and speak to these things.

I remember when the member for Nickel Belt, Ms Martel—it was the current Minister of Finance, you'll remember this, Mr Runciman, he was Minister of Labour at the time—a relatively new member, embarked on what was at that point the longest speech in the history of this House. It was. I remember. I was here late into the night with her. I regrettably had to follow her, having only just been elected here, I think for a couple of weeks. I thought, my goodness, I couldn't possibly succeed her and carry this on.

My job at that point was to put the caucus's position clearly on the record, over and over again if necessary, so that people listening, people watching, would understand where New Democrats stood. I don't think people have any doubt about where New Democrats stand: firmly with public power. Where the Liberals stand from day to day, I suppose, depends upon the observer and on the Liberal you're talking to.

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to join the debate this evening. It's been a very educational evening. I think there have been times when history has been redrawn this evening. I wanted to comment mostly because of my experience in Brampton Centre when I was on municipal council. I was one of the individuals who had the responsibility of selling my Hydro utility, unwillingly, I might add, probably for the highest sum ever recorded anywhere in Ontario.

As I joined the Legislature, I asked for a report and got one from the research and information services branch on the key developments, 80 years of developments. The proposed sale of Hydro One and the court challenge back in 2001 was something that rocked this province. It changed the way we looked at hydro utilities. It was challenged in court. We spent millions of dollars fighting to ensure that we had a good, safe, reliable electricity system.

Our provincial government now is providing leadership on a very difficult issue. It's clear the status quo is not an option. As a former councillor, I saw this at first hand when I looked at what Hydro One proposed for our community, at what they currently do. I feel comfortable that what we are proposing here in this piece of legislation will give people confidence that we will have a conservation plan, an energy plan and an ability to provide businesses throughout Ontario with options and services they can rely upon no matter the size of their business. This is a piece of legislation that I hope everyone in the House can support.

Mr Sterling: I just want to make it clear that although the member for Ottawa West talked about Ron Stewart, I didn't even mention Ron Stewart, I mentioned Ottawa Hydro and their reputation in the city of Ottawa.

I want to talk a little bit about NUGs, non-utility generators. Why should we believe this government has a good plan when the last Liberal government came forward with the whole notion of non-utility generators? What they did back in the late 1980s, in terms of Ontario Hydro, was that they said to Ontario Hydro, "You go out to the private sector and get them to supply us with new generation, NUGs". They went out and made deals to buy power at nine cents, at 10 cents, at 12 cents per kilowatt hour. As a result of doing that, what happened was that Ontario Hydro incurred a liability of almost \$4 billion. That's how these guys are going to balance their budget next year. They've brought that debt over from Ontario Hydro into the Ontario coffers and said, "This is a write-off." They didn't write off all the non-utility generation, but they did most of it.

Why should we believe that the same gang that recklessly went out and bought power at three or four times the market price, and then stuck the Ontario taxpayer with a \$4-billion debt, has a better plan now? They didn't know what they were doing then; they don't know what they are doing now.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakville has two minutes to reply.

Mr Flynn: It's a pleasure to respond. I appreciate the input and comments on the proposed bill from the members from Brampton Centre, Niagara Centre, Lanark-Carleton and Nepean-Carleton.

I guess there are some people who would like to maintain the status quo. That is an option that is simply a non-starter for the province of Ontario, when you see that the price of doing nothing is far greater than any plan that is being proposed here today. What we're going to ensure

is that residential and small business constituents receive a fair and stable rate plan

There were some comments from the member from Nepean-Carleton about the rate freeze at 4.3. What he didn't tell you during his comments, what he didn't tell the people of Ontario, was that that was putting us another billion dollars in debt. That seems to me to be an important point that needs to be taken into consideration. When you're telling people part of the story, perhaps it's incumbent upon you to tell the whole story so you can make an informed decision.

Under our plan, the Ontario Energy Board would approve an annual rate plan for residential and other low-volume consumers. That's going to be based on an expected, regulated contract and market prices. The rate plan for residential and other low-volume consumers would be set by the Ontario Energy Board. Consumers and small businesses that don't wish to participate in the rate plan would be free to purchase their electricity from energy retailers or directly through the market. Large consumers, as they do, would continue to have all the options afforded to them by the market, or they too can buy from retailers as well.

What I think we have is a comprehensive plan that we are ready to move ahead with. We have a plan that's going to ensure Ontario has a stable and affordable energy supply.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 100?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure tonight to speak to Bill 100. The member from Oakville just hit on the crux—

Hon Mr Ramsay: What are you drinking there?

Mr Yakabuski: Water, your honour, strictly water.

The member hit on the crux of what it's all about when it comes to energy in Ontario—a safe, secure, economical supply. We tend to complicate things. I know we live in a complicated world. You hear that all the time, "My goodness gracious, do we live in a complicated world today or what?" But there are times when we have to simplify the world we live in. As to the energy situation we face today, you can complicate it or you can simplify it. But the Minister of Energy has said, in his own words, I believe, "What are we talking about here? Supply, supply, supply."

It's like this. If you want to have a successful society today, you have to have a strong economy. One of the cornerstones of a strong economy is a safe, secure, economical, competitively priced energy supply. In my opinion, this bill does not address that.

Let's go back a little bit in history. The Liberals have never had an energy policy. Somebody else has always had to do it for them. When the previous government moved to deregulate energy prices, the Liberals jumped on the bandwagon because they wouldn't know a good idea if it hit them on the head. They thought that might be a good idea, so they were going to support it. When the government decided to reregulate prices because supply was not coming on-line as expected, the Liberals jumped on that bandwagon. They just don't seem to understand

that you have to somehow show some leadership when it comes to an energy bill.

For the most part, this bill is a rehash of previous energy policies, but one thing that is significantly different in it is, they want to shut down every coal-fired generating station in this province by 2007. Let me correct that. They have promised to shut down every coal-fired generating station in this province by 2007. It is simply not doable, but this is the charade they're going to carry on with the people of Ontario for a couple of years further into the future. You know why? Because they have been branded over and over again, and rightfully so, as the party that never met a promise it couldn't break. They're trying to hang on to this energy promise about these coal-fired stations. However, they will be breaking this one too.

The fact that this whole bill is predicated partially around that, I have to, at this time, move for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Yakabuski has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2103 to 2133.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. It being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

The House adjourned at 2134.

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Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HIGHWAY MEMORIALS

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I move that, in the opinion of this House, Bonnechere River Bridge on Highway 17 in Horton township should be renamed Provincial Constable Philip Shrive Memorial Bridge, pursuant to the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act, 2002.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Yakabuski, you have 10 minutes.

Mr Yakabuski: It is my honour and pleasure to rise in this House today, not only for the first time introducing a matter of private members' business, but also for the very nature of the motion, and that is to honour a fallen officer of the Ontario Provincial Police, Philip Shrive.

When Philip Shrive joined the force as a civilian CPIC operator in 1972, he did so because he wanted to be a police officer. In 1974, he was presented with his provincial badge by his older brother Paul, who was already an active member of the OPP: badge number 4981. He had his first posting at Sioux Lookout.

Following that, he was transferred to Downsview and worked as a motorcycle traffic enforcement officer. He never lost his love of motorcycles; he retained that for the rest of his life.

In 1989, he went back up north and worked in the South Porcupine detachment as a court officer, district OMPPAC coordinator and with RIDE. He was also project coordinator in the crime unit. Here he began his direct involvement in the Ontario Provincial Police Association executive.

In 1996, he transferred to West Carleton, and after the closing of that detachment, he transferred to the Renfrew detachment in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

On May 16, Phil Shrive was involved in an accident while conducting routine radar enforcement and succumbed to his injuries seven days later. He understood when he accepted that badge from his brother that death could await him at any time. The nature of a policeman's job is one in which you don't know, when you leave that

detachment in the morning or the evening or whenever your shift begins, what is out there waiting for you. He understood that that was an inherent risk of the job. But I dare say that when he left the detachment office on May 16, 2003, only eight days from his retirement, that daily inherent risk was foremost on his mind. I am quite certain that Philip Shrive may have been thinking in a bitter-sweet way about what was going to happen eight days later, and that was his retirement—a retirement, I'm sure, that he would naturally be approaching with mixed emotions, because he was going to be saying goodbye to his comrades on a job that he served with distinction for over 30 years.

But he was going to be in a position then where he could spend more time with his wife, his children, and some of pursuits that he loved so dearly, such as that of being a fixed-wing pilot, and his motorcycles, as I had mentioned earlier, so he could get a little time to ride around that beautiful country that we share in Renfrew county in eastern Ontario.

I'm sure there might have been some repartee in the office that morning, some of his fellow officers maybe needling Phil a little bit about, "Well, eight days and counting, Shrive, you're outta here," maybe even, May 16 being a Friday, thinking about at some point having a chance to have a cup of coffee and talk about old times. I do know that his best friend on the force, Sergeant Dave Crilly, did share a coffee with him shortly before he went out on that last, fatal ride. So we wonder what might have been going through Phil's mind that day, but I'm sure, as I say, the emotions would have run the gamut in so many ways.

But later that day, as I said, Provincial Constable Philip Shrive was involved in an accident in the line of duty where he was critically injured, and he succumbed to his injuries seven days later. On that day, May 23, 2003, Ontario lost another one of its provincial police constables, Philip's wife Karen lost her husband, his parents lost their son, his two brothers and his sister lost a brother, and his children lost their father.

1010

Maybe I can take a moment now to point out that in the members' west gallery today are Philip Shrive's widow, Karen; Sergeant Dave Crilly of the Renfrew Ontario Provincial Police detachment, and Phil's best friend; and also Tony Lamothe, the executive officer of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. We thank you for joining us today.

In the year 2000, a memorial to police officers was erected here at Queen's Park to honour all the fallen

officers who lost their lives in the line of duty in the province of Ontario. Premier Mike Harris, Lieutenant Governor Hilary Weston and Solicitor General David Tsubouchi of the day were there to unveil that memorial in May 2000.

In 2002, the then opposition member and now Honourable Rick Bartolucci introduced a private member's bill, and I commend Mr Bartolucci for his passion and his conviction in believing that something more had to be done. There had to be another way of memorializing and honouring these fallen heroes in a more individual way. So he introduced a bill to the House, Bill 128. If I may read it: An Act to permit the naming of highway bridges and other structures on the King's Highway in memory of police officers who have died in the line of duty. I wasn't a member of the House at that time but I certainly would have supported that bill, and I commend Mr Bartolucci and the members of this House for passing it at that time.

As a result of that bill, it gave us the opportunity to name structures after fallen police officers. Last year, Sergeant Mike Forester, Sergeant Colin Slight and provincial Constable Janice Sawbridge came to my office and asked if I would be willing to bring this forth to the Legislature. I immediately said that I would not only be happy but I would be honoured to do so. Subsequent to that, the council of the town of Renfrew, the council of the township of Horton, where the bridge is located, the council of the township of Admaston/Bromley, and the council of the region of Whitewater have all passed motions supporting this and encouraging me to do just that.

On the first anniversary of Phil Shrive's death, May 23 of this year, the members of the Ontario Provincial Police detachment in Renfrew erected a memorial in his honour on the very spot on Highway 17 where this fatal accident occurred. It is a cross with a replica of Constable Shrive's duty hat and also his badge number.

It is my hope that the members of this House will do Philip Shrive the honour of, in addition to that memorial placed by his fellow officers, allowing us to name the bridge traversing the Bonnechere River in his honour.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I congratulate the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his very good 10 minutes of history with regard to this fallen officer, and also for the initiative.

Let me speak now, Speaker, through you always, directly to Karen and David. Karen, as I mentioned earlier to you before the House took place, we today celebrate Philip's life. We celebrate his dedication, we celebrate his passion, we celebrate the diligence with which he carried out those very important duties as a police officer. We celebrate, in fact, in death the continuing memory of a man we should all be proud of.

I want to tell you, David, I've had the experience of hiring two police officers, in my time as a police services board member, who have died tragically in the line of

duty. I continue to be friends of those police officers' best friends, so I know the pain that you're experiencing today.

In that pain, Karen and David, I want you to realize that the emotion you're feeling is experienced in this House and across the province of Ontario. We are very proud of the dedication of your husband. Tragically, he died, and he must be remembered in a significant, meaningful way.

That brings me back to the private member's bill because, Karen and David, I believe it's very important for you to understand that the impetus for this private member's bill came from the Ontario Provincial Police. We have a representative with us here today: Tony Lamothe. They came and visited me and asked if I would champion the cause. It's an honour to champion this type of cause. Today we see the fruits of the harvest. We see that, for the first time in the history of the province of Ontario, a police officer will be recognized in a memorial bridge.

As I heard the member speak, I kept on thinking that this is exactly the type of situation that we should be remembering on an ongoing basis, because I heard the enormous love of the job he had. I heard about the enormous commitment Philip had. I heard about the enormous sense of camaraderie he had with his fellow police officers—especially David. I heard of the passion he had for his family and his wife, Karen, and for his association.

Truly, this is a celebration, albeit filled with the emotion that is always generated with death. It is a celebration of life, of the life of a good man, of the life of a good police officer, and that should never, ever be forgotten. Karen and David, know that we share in your pain. Know as well that from here on in, if this resolution passes, he will be remembered in a very positive, meaningful, real way. His candle will continue to burn very, very brightly, providing those of us in Ontario with the confidence we should have in our police forces, and also he will be that example for others to become police officers, to protect and to serve.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of speaking today, and God bless you.

1020

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I am honoured to make a few remarks today, having represented the area that Constable Shrive served in, the township of West Carleton as it then was, from 1996 to 1999.

I want to speak particularly about his work as a community services officer, a marine operator and generally his work with the youth of the township of West Carleton. I'm pleased to acknowledge the help of Eli El-Chantiry, who is now the serving councillor for the area of the township of West Carleton in the city of Ottawa. As you know we had an amalgamation in and around 1999-2000. Before that particular time Mr El-Chantiry ran a restaurant in Constance Bay, and Phil would often drop in for a cup of coffee and talk with Eli.

Eli, not only now as a municipal politician, knew Phil very well and in fact was honoured to give one of the eulogies at Constable Shrive's funeral.

I like to also acknowledge Peggy Austen, the youth program coordinator of the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre, who had a great deal of experience with Phil in his work at West Carleton. I wanted to say that we in West Carleton were really, really fortunate to have Phil there at that particular time, because in that community we lost five young people over a very short period of time. Unfortunately, more than one of them committed suicide, and therefore there was a crisis in the community, a crisis in terms of trying to deal with a very, very difficult problem. The community felt immediately relieved that Constable Shrive stepped up to the plate and helped with that situation in many ways.

Constable Shrive had a commitment to young people in our community. He was the first officer to have an office in West Carleton Secondary School, the high school in that particular area. He had classes with kids, he went and talked with kids about the problems of dealing with their anguish and grief with regard to losing young people in that community.

He held activities in West Carleton Secondary School to promote things like using seat belts in their cars and to deal with anti-impaired driving programs. We will never know how many lives he has saved through his public dedication, by working with the youth in West Carleton. I must say that when he was working with the youth of West Carleton his children—Neil, Karen, Graham and Becky—were involved in many of the things that he undertook as well.

He worked with the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre in terms of dealing with the increased awareness of issues of youth suicide, and developed prevention strategies as well. As a result of a suicide in that school, Phil got involved in the early development of the Brady Burnette Teen Assistance Fund, a partnership with the local business people and to raise funds and awareness regarding youth suicide prevention.

Phil loved boating, and he was the first marine officer ever to ply local waters. One of the things he did in addition to his enforcement duties was that he took out on his boat, from time to time, youth that were at risk, so that he would be able to influence them to lead more constructive lives as he went forward.

One of the most heart-rending stories that I did hear about Phil was told by Peggy Austen. He organized a very, very important event for a seven-year-old and a 10-year-old who were suffering from terminal cancer. He arranged for a box at the Ottawa Senators hockey club at the Corel Centre in the west part of Ottawa, to take those children to a hockey game with their parents, and he drove them back and forth in his police car. Both of those young children unfortunately passed away months later, but their parents remember the kindness and care that Constable Shrive showed with his generosity to people who were in great need of support.

West Carleton felt a great blow in hearing about this particular accident. One of the sad parts about amal-

gamation in the city of Ottawa was that we lost our OPP detachment, and we lost Constable Shrive as a result of that. We all in that area were fighting against losing the OPP detachment and people like Constable Shrive, and unfortunately we did lose him and his great efforts that he made to our community in that area.

Karen, I want to express the community's sadness, of course, but our thanks for all of the contributions your husband and your family have made to my community. He will be a man that will be remembered always, and we admire him greatly.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed my privilege and honour to stand to speak to this private member's motion today. I commend the member from Renfrew for bringing this motion forward. We in Canada often name bridges, rivers, streets, towns after events in other countries, after people from other countries. This is an opportunity for us as Ontarians, as Canadians, to honour one of our own heroes.

I never had the opportunity to meet Constable Shrive. I never had the opportunity to know him or his family before today. But I do know, from what we have been told today and the very sad events that led up to his death, that he was a man who served his community. He was a fine police officer and he was a hero to the people who knew him.

Canadians are rather unassuming in looking at their heroes, in determining who their heroes are, in remembering them or in offering praise to them. You can go to literally any town or city in Ontario, and you will see that there are street signs that reflect trees, street signs that reflect fauna, street signs that reflect foreign places around the world, but you will not see the names of local heroes; you will not see the names of local people who have made an impact on their community. I welcome this opportunity to start to change that, to start to say that Canadians have a proud history, that the people of Ontario have a proud history, and certainly the family of Philip Shrive has a proud history that should be put on that bridge. The name should be there for all time so that people will not forget one truly great hero from that community.

The people of Renfrew have lost someone whom they had grown to respect, to know, and who had given of himself over many years of distinguished and dedicated service. That's what we need to remember. A hero can distinguish himself or herself in many ways, but I would think the greatest heroes are not those that do some heroic event once in their lives, but those who wake up each and every day and put their lives on the line, as Mr Shrive did. He went out every day knowing the risks of being a police officer. He went out every day to defend the people of his community, to make sure they lived with law and order, and in the end he gave his life in that service.

1030

We are supporting this bill in his memory, but we are supporting this bill as well so that generations from now people from the Shrive family, people who did not know

him at all, will stand on that bridge, and a child will ask his parent, "Who was Philip Shrive? Why is this bridge named 'Philip Shrive'?" The story can be told, and retold again, of how he gave his life in service of his community, that he made the sacrifice and made his community a better place in which to live.

We are supporting this because it is the right thing to do, but we are supporting this because Renfrew, and Ontario, was a better place because of Officer Shrive, and the remembrance in the name of this bridge will serve for all time the people of Ontario to remember a hero.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to be able to stand in the House today and support Mr Yakabuski's motion to rename the bridge over the Bonnechere River in honour of Constable Philip Shrive.

I believe it's very appropriate that we honour the people who have given their lives to protect us. Our police officers, and indeed our firefighters and other emergency responders, go to the job every day not knowing what danger they will encounter in the course of their duty or what they will be called on to do to protect us. On a daily basis they face dangers, they face crises and they face incidents that none of the rest of us are called on to do in the course of our daily lives. They do this without question, without resistance. They know it is their job to protect the rest of us in our society. It is right that we should honour the people who protect the citizens of Ontario.

Philip Shrive is an excellent example of the wonderful police officers who protect us, the citizens of the province, in the course of their daily work. It is very right that we should honour Philip Shrive, who unfortunately lost his life in the line of duty, working for the people of Ontario.

I am very pleased to support Mr Yakabuski's motion.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): It's an honour for me to speak to this motion as well, especially in the presence of Mrs Shrive.

I didn't know Constable Shrive personally, but I did attend his funeral in my capacity as Minister of Public Safety and Security. The depth of feeling and affection and love for Philip Shrive was so evident at his funeral. It was indeed a very emotional time, clearly, for the family, the community and fellow officers throughout North America.

I had the opportunity to be responsible for policing as Solicitor General and as the Minister of Public Safety and Security for almost six years in this province. I was the critic, in opposition, for the Ministry of Solicitor General in earlier days for about four years as well. I had the opportunity to work very closely with police officers from rookie ranks to senior management levels in policing throughout those years, and my respect has just grown and grown. The contributions they make on a daily basis, we've all heard of that, but I don't think you can really understand it unless you are a police officer, a serving police officer, or if you are a family member of a police officer—a spouse, the children, brothers, sisters—and others who understand and appreciate and recognize

the threats that they can be faced with on daily basis on any shift.

I should point out that both of my daughters are OPP officers, and I'm very proud of them. I recall my older girl talking about a pull-over she had on the 401 at 3 o'clock in the morning, a speeding car with Quebec licence plates. She's not the biggest gal in the world, but getting out of a car at 3 o'clock in the morning to confront someone speeding—fortunately, in that particular situation, another officer was passing by, pulled over and provided backup support. It turned out that these two individuals were wanted, and they are armed. That's the kind of situation—totally unexpected—that you can be confronted with, in what you think is perhaps the most innocent of situations, and be faced with life-and-death decisions. Those kinds of challenges can confront a police officer at any moment in his or her carrying out of duties.

These are subjects that I certainly can get emotional about, not just because my daughters are police officers but because I've been involved with so many of these issues over the years. What perhaps tugged at my heartstrings initially and got me looking at so many of these issues was the murder of Joe MacDonald in Sudbury a number of years ago, and getting to know the MacDonald family personally. I'm still great friends with Joe's brother-in-law, Franco Fragomeni.

What that was the catalyst for, when I had the great opportunity to be Solicitor General, was the development of the survivors' tuition fund, which provides education tuition funds for families of officers who lose their lives in the line of duty. Without doubt, I think that's the initiative I'm most proud of during my time in government.

I want to compliment Mr Yakabuski. I served with his dad in this House. Mr Sterling, and I think Mr Bradley, are the only remaining survivors of those days. It's making us feel old on occasion. But he is doing his dad proud; there's no question about it. He's doing his riding proud.

This is a wonderful initiative. It's wonderful in the fact that it recognizes Phil's life, his contribution to policing, and the ultimate sacrifice that Phil Shrive made on behalf of all of us.

Congratulations to Mr Yakabuski. It's wonderful to see Mrs Shrive here. We hope the government moves on this initiative very quickly.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I too want to support the initiative introduced today by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and also to say that although I never knew the late Mr Shrive or Karen, this is an important way for people like me and many other members to recognize and honour the memory of the late Mr Shrive.

Many of us know, have met and talked to many policemen and women in the course of our lifetime enough to understand the service they provide and risks they encounter on the job, day in and day out. It's because of the risks they face and the service they provide that they enjoy the respect of all of us, the majority of

citizens in this province and this country. While the job may be free of risks, problems, dangers some days, many months of the year or sometimes years, they live with the fear that at any one point of their working lives as police officers they put themselves on the line and they put their lives on the line. They know that and we know that. That is why we respect the work they do. It's not an easy job. It's not a job that I would do. But we are blessed with the fact that there are many men and women who want to do that job for the sole purpose of protecting the lives of Ontario citizens.

1040

How do we honour those officers who die on the job, protecting the lives of the citizen of Ontario? This initiative, this particular bill we are dealing with, is a way to remember that individual life and the service they provided. It's a way to remind the public of the service that police officers are doing day in and day out and it's a way to honour policemen and women for the work they generally do. So it isn't just to honour the late Mr Shrive, but it is to honour the policemen and women, the police service.

By naming a bridge for the late Mr Shrive, it's a way to permanently put his name there so that we may remember. I think it's a good thing to do, and it's an important way for us, as politicians, to remind ourselves that we need to find respectful ways to honour their service.

So it's with pleasure that I'm here to support the bill and give some of my time to permit many other members who may wish to say what they would like to say on behalf of the late Mr Shrive, and for whatever comments they would want to make on behalf of his wife, who is present here today.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's my pleasure as well to rise with my colleagues in support of the motion from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in support of a memorial for Constable Shrive.

I think one of the things we forget sometimes, as we honour the memory of the man who did the work in his community—and I heard about his work with youth and, obviously, his compassion as he dealt with people who broke the laws. I read that he gave them a break sometimes instead of giving them a ticket. I think we sometimes forget about the person himself and the incredible juggling that someone must do in that line of work for and with their families, that kind of dedication and the toll it can take on a family. To stay for 30 years on behalf of service in your community really says a lot about the man, the person himself.

That's the tribute, I think. We not only remember those who give their lives to serve and protect. That's not a cliché. I remember, as a mom, taking our kids to meet the police officer, because this was the person you could always turn to when you got into some difficulty. But as I now have two officers who are in my family, I recognize the extraordinary toll that it takes on their families, because there is the issue around fear, the fact that they go out to serve and protect others. It's tough and it's

hard, and for someone to stay in that for 30 years really is a testimony to the extraordinary gentleman that Constable Shrive must have been.

I say that every time someone crosses that bridge, they're not only going to remember his dedication as an individual, but his extraordinary commitment as a family man to his wife and to his children. Those are wonderful memories that we all can keep, and especially for his wife, Karen, and the children.

I thank you for bringing this motion forward and for permitting all of us in this House the opportunity to support Minister Bartolucci and yourself in memory of fallen officers.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. Just to clarify, it's my understanding that the House has agreed that the remaining NDP time will be used by the official opposition.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning and support this motion. I too would like to welcome Constable Philip Shrive's wife, Karen, and colleague to the Legislature this morning.

We often fail to show adequate appreciation for the front-line officers who work every day to keep us safe. They are brave and committed men and women to whom we owe a constant debt of gratitude. Every day, police officers put their lives on the line. Tragically, some officers are killed in the line of duty. It is our obligation to support their families and to honour these officers.

As has already been mentioned by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in 2002, the member for Sudbury, the Honourable Mr Bartolucci, introduced Bill 128, the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act. Under this act, it is appropriate that this House pass this resolution to name the Bonnechere bridge on Highway 17 in Horton township after provincial Constable Philip Shrive.

Over his 30 years of service, Constable Shrive led a distinguished career and held many different roles within the OPP. As has been said, he was tragically killed in a roadside accident in 2003. I particularly note that Constable Shrive shared many of the passions that I share. He was a pilot and had a love for flying and he also enjoyed riding motorcycles, two different activities that I also share and enjoy.

I know that Constable Shrive is missed dearly by his family and friends. I can certainly relate to worrying about someone close to you going out each day and working in the OPP. My wife, Chris, works as an auxiliary OPP, and as such goes out on regular patrols with OPP officers in the Muskoka area.

I'm pleased to see that there's widespread support for this motion. My Yakabuski has brought this motion to us at the request of the members of the Renfrew detachment of the OPP and it is supported by the Renfrew detachment commander, the regional chief superintendent and all the surrounding communities.

I note that it was a traffic accident that caused the death of Constable Shrive and I think we have to do all

we can to prevent this type of accident. Just last year, as a step to avoid these accidents, member Runciman, previous Minister of Public Safety and Security, introduced and passed legislation to protect police officers, firefighters and other emergency personnel. I believe we have to pass more laws like that to try to do what we can to protect police officers.

But in the case of Constable Shrive, we must do what we can to honour his commitment and bravery. The OPP association honour roll includes the following quote entitled "Lest We Forget: 'Remember our fallen members and their memory, if we forget, who but their family will remember, after all we are all family.'"

Officers across the province do more than just uphold the law: they are part of the community. It is appropriate to have a more tangible tribute to our officers. During my morning routine, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and myself go for a 6 am walk. This morning, we walked by the police memorial. Each spring there's a ceremony and, unfortunately, more names get added to it. There are currently 89 names, I believe, on the police memorial. I noted that there is one name from my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and that was Constable Richard Verdecchia, who was shot and killed in Huntsville in 1981. I think it is important that we recognize and honour these police officers that have given their lives in the line of duty.

I think naming the Bonnechere bridge in honour of Constable Shrive is a fitting way of remembering him. Lastly, I would like to congratulate the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for bringing this motion forward on behalf of the police officers of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Congratulations, Mr Yakabuski, on bringing this motion forward. I will be supporting it.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): King George II said that bravery never goes out of fashion—never. That's something that all of us in this House have to keep in mind, something that we'll always be aware of because there are those of us who create laws and there are those who uphold the law.

The bravest people we have in our society are our police officers. I rise today to support the resolution by my friend the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. His motion clearly touches something that touches all the members in this House: the need for us always to remember, to celebrate and to hold up those in our society who truly are heroes, who go about and do their duty without complaint every day, and particularly to support their families, who pay a tremendous price on a daily basis, some of course more than others, but every day pay a price, knowing their loved ones are going out to uphold the law, to serve and protect.

1050

I wanted to speak to this motion because it reminded me of my friend Brenda Herbert, whom I've known for many years. Her husband is Rod Herbert; he's with the Sebringville detachment. Brenda's sister, Marg Eve, was the very first female OPP officer killed in this province, tragically on the 401, in the line of duty. I didn't know

Marg—she came from my riding—but I knew her sister and I knew her brother, who also wears the badge. Sergeant Margaret Eve—her badge number was 6768. I know through personal experience the tremendous pain that her family went through.

So I want to commend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for his forward-thinking bill that he brought into this House that allows those of us who write the laws to always be able to act on behalf of all of the people of Ontario to remember those who uphold the law. Obviously, Karen, in the case of Phil it was a tragedy with an addition of grief that is almost unbelievable. It reminds me of what the great writer Herman Melville said: "Familiarity with danger makes a brave man braver, but less daring."

When I first became involved in the political process, I spent an evening with an officer from the OPP detachment in Sebringville for what they call a ride-along. Every member of this House should go on a ride-along; it's a remarkable experience. It allows us—those of us who never get to see that—to see what it is to be an officer in a car alone, minutes away from any backup, which is something that I know the OPP in a rural area deal with on a daily basis; and just how very, very important that is, that we are able, through Minister Bartolucci's bill and through the resolution from my friend, to have that bridge at Bonnechere—that's a wonderful name, Bonnechere, but it's going to have a better name; it is. People 100 years from now will always remember. I can imagine school children who will say, "Why did we name that bridge? Who was Phil Shrive?"

We can't bring him back, but we can remember him. That's why there is the memorial at Queen's Park. That's why those of us, as I said, who create the laws always have to be mindful of those who have to uphold those laws.

Finally, in closing, I want to say that we should always remember the words of Homer: "Always to be bravest and to be pre-eminent above all others." I can think of no more fitting tribute to the members of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am pleased today to rise to support the motion being brought forward by my colleague John Yakabuski from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think it's a testament to how much he cares about his community that the first motion he tables in the House is one that honours a fallen police officer.

I want to thank the family and Karen for coming. I can only imagine how difficult it is for you today, but what a tribute to your husband, that Mr Yakabuski has brought this forward.

Thanks also to David Crilly and to Tony Lamothe, the executive officer with the OPP association. I know that Constable Shrive had a great dedication to the association, as well as 30 years of service to his community.

We often fail to show adequate appreciation for the front-line police officers. Our police protect Ontario every day. They are brave, committed men and women,

and we owe a great deal of debt and gratitude. This is one way that we can certainly acknowledge all their services. They put their lives on the line. They're killed in the line of duty. I think it's only fitting that a bridge be named in honour of a fallen officer and so close to the scene of the accident. It's certainly going to be a reminder to everyone in the riding.

I want to thank Minister Bartolucci, who is not here with us now but was, for bringing in the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act in November 2002, which is the year that it was passed. I know that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has the support of all of the local municipal councils in the riding. It is the will of these municipalities, who want to honour one of their own. We should respect their wish in this matter to name the bridge after the fallen officer.

I know about the OPP honour roll and memorial that's out across from us today. A couple of members of the OPP from my riding whose names appear are Randall Skidmore, a provincial constable from the Coboconk detachment who was killed in February 1986, and Eric Nystedt, a provincial constable from Minden who was tragically killed only a few miles from where I live. He was killed in 1993. I know that they are still in memory. They have an annual memorial run in Sault Ste Marie, and he continues to hold the record for the 1.5 kilometre run at the Ontario Police College. We need to remember our fallen officers in our riding at that time.

The preamble of the bill introduced was:

"We, the people of Ontario, are forever grateful to the dedicated police officers who have courageously and unselfishly given their lives in the line of duty. Our debt to them can never be repaid.

"We are also forever grateful to Ontario's police officers who have demonstrated extraordinary courage by giving their lives to preserve our free and peaceful society.

"We must never forget the contribution of those men and women to whom we owe so much. As a gesture of our respect, we seek to honour them by permitting the Legislature to name highway bridges and other structures in their memory."

I think there is very little more that needs to be said, because I can't think of anything we could do that would be more appropriate than to pass this motion and call upon the government to rename the bridge in honour of the fallen constable. I hope everyone supports the motion.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): It is far too often that our police officers who protect the public fall in duty. I can tell you from first-hand experience when I was parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General the number of situations with police officers and also with firefighters who are there to protect the public, and they leave us in circumstances that we don't understand.

I take one case in point, which is Police Constable Kuzmich from the South Simcoe Police Service, a situation where, with two young boys and at a very

young age, he left us, and in circumstances that nobody understands. I just want to say to my colleague Mr Yakabuski and to the family of Police Constable Philip Shrive that this Legislature cares. We understand. I think it is important that this recognition go to this officer and in recognition of police officers across this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Yakabuski, you have two minutes to reply.

1100

Mr Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House from Lanark-Carleton, Leeds-Grenville, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I also want to thank the members from the government side, the honourable Minister of Northern Development and Mines from Sudbury and the members from Guelph-Wellington, Etobicoke Centre and Perth-Middlesex, and also, from the New Democratic Party, the members from Beaches-East York and Trinity-Spadina.

What we saw today was the spirit of non-partisanship at its very best. We have seen members of all sides of this House come together to support a motion that I am honoured to be able to present to the House, to support this motion for a cause everyone supports.

I dare say that if the time allowed for it, we could speak for hours on this, and every member of the House would be willing to speak on it, but the rules being as they are, we have an allotted amount of time.

One thing that shone through in the responses over and over again was the common denominator of Philip Shrive's life, his life as a man, his life as a police officer, his love for people, his love for his fellow officers, his love for children, his love for his family. He was one of the good guys. I heard that said by more than one person.

I could go on and give copious quotations from people who have worked with Phil Shrive, who have served with him, who have been his friend in personal and professional ways. Suffice it to say, we lost one of our great ones, one of our great officers in Phil Shrive in May 2003. It is so appropriate that today this House comes together to honour him and to honour his wife in this way.

CITY OF TORONTO AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Ms Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la cité de Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms Wynne, you have 10 minutes.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to congratulate Mr Yakabuski, and I want to acknowledge that we're moving from a very human, non-partisan

discussion to one that is inherently political. I just wanted to acknowledge that transition.

It gives me great honour to rise today to speak to Bill 120, the City of Toronto Amendment Act, 2004, which I introduced in this Legislature on October 12—and a bit of a sense of the surreal, and I'll talk about why that is. I choose to think of this bill as an act to increase local democracy in Toronto.

I have introduced this bill because I believe there is a crying need for a broad, public discussion of how our local governments should function, what their relationship with the provincial government should be and the areas over which there ought to be local control.

If passed, Bill 120 would signify a recognition of the city of Toronto's potential to address local concerns. Toronto has been, in its past, a model of urban civility and strong local governance for the world. It should be that again. If passed, this bill would promote the principles of responsibility and accountability by situating control as close as possible to the people affected, allowing the city to respond to issues of local concern.

That's not to say that this bill is intended to be a discussion that is relevant only to Toronto. Many municipalities around the province, and in fact across the country, are considering their relationship with provincial governments. However, the fact is that a City of Toronto Act, 1997, exists; it was enacted by the previous government. It's a flawed piece of legislation and it needs to be amended. It is the charter for the city of Toronto, and we need to get it right.

I want to take a minute to put this bill in context, because it doesn't come out of the blue for me. We're having this discussion today because of the political ethos that shrouded Queen's Park with the election of the Conservatives in the spring of 1995. Their value system was disturbing to many of us. In fact, it was antithetical to the compassionate system of government we had experienced for generations in Ontario, including a responsive local democratic system. The value system of meanness and division really didn't ring true with the majority of Ontarians, I believe.

It seemed from their actions that that new government was intent upon blaming people who were not fortunate enough to be financially successful, forcing communities and citizens within communities to fight for resources, and forcing the marginalized to further fend for themselves, removing concepts of equity and fairness from the lexicon of government.

One of the galvanizing moments for people of social conscience in the first year of the Mike Harris years was the moment when 21% cuts to welfare rates were introduced hand in hand with tax cuts for the province's wealthier citizens. At that moment, in Toronto and around the province, concerned citizens began to meet in neighbours' kitchens—I had a group meeting in my kitchen—church halls and university seminar rooms to strategize how they could help to preserve social justice in the face of this new Tory neo-conservative dogma.

But I believe it was the advent of policies that threatened to undermine our very democratic structures

that shook citizens of this city, because without those structures in place those social justice issues could not be redressed.

The Tories' Bill 103, which came to be known as the megacity act, was the catalyst for the creation of the group Citizens for Local Democracy, which was led and inspired by John Sewell, who is with us today, and Liz Rykert. Sewell, as a former mayor of Toronto and an urban thinker, knew exactly what was at stake as the Tories moved to make their simplistic and unfounded hatred of this city real.

For two full years I worked with Citizens for Local Democracy, or C4LD, as we met first in the Toronto city hall council chambers and then in the sanctuaries of downtown churches to support each other in our resistance to the megacity, to listen to inspirational political speeches by some of the local politicians—the member for Beaches-East York being one of those—and provincial politicians, to hear local music and poetry that was written on the occasion of the fight for local democracy, and to strategize. I dare say there are some members in the House who remember that we even visited this august chamber on some occasions.

But the Tories amalgamated the former municipalities of East York, York, Toronto, Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke nonetheless, against the advice of urban thinkers, against the advice of people like Jane Jacobs and Ursula Franklin, who had lived in this city and understood what made it work, and against the will of 76% of the people who voted in a referendum in March 1997 against amalgamation of these cities.

The amalgamation itself was debilitating, but in combination with the downloading of new costs and the further withdrawal of power to determine its own destiny, the whole bundle of issues created a malaise in this city from which I don't think we've recovered. Citizens of Toronto believe their city is not as healthy as it was prior to amalgamation. Most significantly, and I think of more fundamental concern, there seems to be an increasing disenchantment and disengagement from government at the local level. We have to turn this around if we're going to have a healthy democracy in this country.

Hence, I think that's why we're seeing a call for a new deal. That's why we're seeing a call for a new relationship with the other levels of government. That's what this is about.

Since last fall, I really believe that with the election of a new mayor and a new Premier, there has been some hope that recovery is possible, that moving forward in evolution is possible. Premier McGuinty has already demonstrated leadership by indicating our government's willingness to work with cities to give them the mechanisms they need to function fully.

My bill is part of that tapestry of change. It's one piece of the very large public debate that I believe we must have about how the provincial government and cities can better relate to each other and define distinct spheres of responsibility, authority and co-operation.

If passed, here is what Bill 120 would do and why.

This bill would give Toronto the option to, first of all, change the number and boundaries of its wards. Toronto is among the only jurisdictions in Ontario that does not already have this power.

Secondly, it would allow the city to change the number of city councillors. If the city can control the number of wards, it has to be able to control the number of councillors.

It would allow the city to change the status, roles, structure and relationship of community councils to the city council. This would allow the city to delegate final decision-making power over issues of local community concern to those communities, or to seek other approaches to make community councils more effective. What this bill does not do is prescribe what that relationship should be between city council and community councils, but it allows the city to make some of those choices.

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It would allow the city to change its election finance rules. In response to Councillor Michael Walker's initiative, the city has recently expressed that the current province-wide rules are not appropriate for the city. Election finances are an important aspect of democratic control, and this would give them the option to take that on.

It would also give the city the option to set the dates of its municipal elections and the term length for city councillors. Councillor Howard Moscoe has begun work on this front. I believe the city is competent to determine when it is best to have its election and for how long councillors should serve. Again, those are all optional.

Finally, this bill would give the city the responsibility to administer its voters list. Particularly among the city's tenants, the voters list has been inaccurate, and the city should have the authority to address that situation.

With the exception of the administration of the voters list, and it would be possible to amend that piece, the adoption of these responsibilities would be optional on the part of the city. The point is that this bill recognizes the maturity and sophistication of Toronto and the ability of its elected representatives to act in the best interests of its residents.

Introduction of this bill is an extension of the work I have done in the last 10 years in this city. It is the expression of my deep belief in the value of citizens having access to local government that can respond, make good decisions and be flexible in the face of big problems. I introduce it in the recognition of the need for local governments to have the option to experiment and to look at different models without cumbersome interference of a higher level of government.

In his recent book, *A New City Agenda*, my friend John Sewell remarks, "Provincial politicians have no interest in making cities stronger and provincial governments weaker." I know he will forgive me when I say that I sincerely hope that we prove him wrong, and in doing so, we will all come out stronger—province and city alike.

My hope is that this bill will add to the debate that we're having about local democracy in every corner of Ontario. I hope that I can count on support from all of the sides of this House. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm very pleased to rise and comment on Bill 120. I congratulate the member for Don Valley West for bringing this bill forward. Actually, I have enjoyed spending some time with the member from Don Valley West. We've been on a couple of political panels together. I know how strongly she feels about Bill 120 and the principles that underlie it. You can certainly get that from her introductory comments to the bill today. From our conversations, I think this reflects her work with Citizens for Local Democracy, an association from some time ago.

I was a bit disappointed with some of the strong language that came forward. I thought we were back in 1997 again, reflecting on the decision of the government of that time to bring the city of Toronto together. The member certainly had the opportunity to bring a bill forward to de-amalgamate Toronto if the views were held so strongly that that was a mistake. I think Premier McGuinty made some promises in that regard with respect to Kawartha Lakes, respecting a referendum to de-amalgamate there. Then, once in office, he sent his Minister of Municipal Affairs to back away, to get off the hook of that particular promise.

I think also there were some promises made by the member—let me check the exact riding name—from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot with respect to the situation in Hamilton. But I believe, as well, that the promise made during the election has been forgotten now that the Liberals are in office. Nonetheless, the member has brought forward a bill that, if passed, gives additional administrative powers to the city of Toronto. I do congratulate her for bringing this bill forward for debate.

I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs himself is looking at similar issues. From our discussions in the estimates committee these last number of days for the fall of 2005, I believe he is currently working—perhaps also through his parliamentary assistant—on the City of Toronto Act. I believe the minister's approach, from what I understood, was hand in hand with Municipal Act reform to see if these types of new powers—administrative or financial—should go hand in hand across the province or be unique to the city of Toronto or a small number of municipal areas. Hopefully, the parliamentary assistant, if he's making a comment, can elucidate that particular issue.

The minister was rather reticent to give particular comment on the member's bill. He said he respected her right to bring it forward. She had given him a heads-up. I appreciate the minister's points on that. Perhaps the parliamentary assistant can give us an indication of whether this bill is in line with the government's thinking and their negotiations with the city of Toronto and AMO, or if it's in another direction entirely.

In the absence of that guidance, I think we in the official opposition see this as a starting point for debate. I

suggest that it could go to committee as something that we could debate as we discuss the role of municipalities in the 21st century. There is an evolving debate about what roles municipalities should have in this century, whether they should be given new authority or what kind of authority that would be, whether there should be new financial levers at the same time to help invest in municipal services. In the absence of substantive material from the minister himself, perhaps Ms Wynne's Bill 120 could be that starting point for that discussion.

There are a number of principles that obviously, as Conservatives, we would support. Certainly, our record in reducing red tape and overburdensome regulation would be something we would continue to follow in our advice as opposition members in that committee. I'll be supporting the principle of local decision-making where possible.

We've seen some initiatives by the government: Bill 26 and the extraordinary powers given to the minister; Bill 27, the greenbelt legislation and some of those extraordinary powers that took away local decision-making. With respect to the gas tax, municipalities that don't have public transit systems not benefiting from the gas tax, and determining what local transportation priorities to fund, the government initiatives run against that grain of local decision-making, but we'll see if they take a different course with respect to Municipal Act reform.

We want to see included in the debate greater accountability directly to the taxpayers of the province in the municipalities, a goal of lower taxes and fees on already overburdened taxpayers. The member does not address the fiscal issues—this is simply an administrative reform—but if we had the opportunity to debate these types of reforms in committee or here in the House, greater accountability to taxpayers and lower taxes and fees would be admirable goals in this process.

I think we all in this chamber respect that Toronto, unique in this province, unique in this nation—not only, obviously, by its sheer size, the importance of its economy, its draw for tourists and magnet for talented immigrants from across the world—produces unique challenges for a dynamic business sector, unique challenges for English as a second language, unique challenges for transit and transportation, getting people and goods to work and to home in a safe and efficient manner. It's not clear to me if those particular challenges would then cause these particular administrative changes to be necessary in terms of their uniqueness to Toronto. Are these types of administrative powers something that should be unique to Toronto? I think the member does not make that claim. It's important for her as a member from the Toronto area.

Would other municipalities—for example, large, single-tier municipalities like Ottawa, like Hamilton—be similarly interested in entering into this debate? I suspect maybe we'll hear from some of those members today on their views, whether these powers should be unique to the city of Toronto or should be discussed broadly across municipalities, even those currently involved in a regional or county set-up.

My friend and colleague from Niagara Falls is here—the sort of municipality that's part of an upper-tier region. Would the lower municipality or an upper-tier municipality be interested in greater administrative powers? I, myself, have been through this debate to an extent by bringing a private member's bill forward for the direct election of the regional chair of Niagara. A number of regions have gone this way, I think. Because of the authority of that office, the broad scope, that individual should be directly elected. There has been response to that bill. So I would anticipate that municipalities across the province would be interested in addressing this issue of additional administrative powers.

Then there's the big debate, of course, on the fiscal triggers, the fiscal levers, the fiscal tools. Is it the government's intent to give new sources of revenue to municipalities? I discussed the gas tax a bit earlier, which seems to be creating two classes of municipalities: those that will receive the gas tax, and probably around 300 municipalities that won't receive the gas tax. Hopefully the parliamentary assistant will give some insight into the government's general direction on the fiscal issues that are absent from this bill but, I think, need to be discussed hand in hand when we talk about the approach to municipalities in the 21st century.

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We're curious about the dynamics within the governing caucus as well—a lot of stories reported about the city of Toronto members versus the GTA members versus the rest of the province members; the urban-rural challenges that any caucus of that size would face. We've seen a lot of that, I think, in the discussion about the gas tax: "What's the distribution model?" I think that was actually promised for October—it's still October; it's within the first year. You can debate whether that's an exactly kept promise or not, but I think it illustrates—

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: I know; you guys want as much latitude as you can have on keeping promises. It was more than a year ago that the election took place, but the point that I'm trying to illustrate here is, I think you probably had, and correct me if I'm wrong, a lot of debate within caucus and cabinet on the distribution of the gas tax because you had to weigh the city of Toronto, the GTA and the rest of the municipalities' points of view. So I look forward to debate from across the floor on their view on some of these issues that Bill 120 presents for us.

In my role that I'm honoured to have as municipal affairs and housing critic, I recognize the evolving debate and the role of municipalities in this new century. I look forward to entering into it in greater detail. I commend the member for Don Valley West for putting something of substance on the floor for our debate—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Deamalgamate Ottawa. What do you think, Tim?

Mr Hudak: Well, I talked a bit earlier about the amalgamation issue and said that was one possibility that the members opposite would have brought forward in their

opposition a few years ago, but today we're concentrating on Bill 120 and administrative reform.

I'll be voting and supporting Bill 120. I look forward to an opportunity to enter into greater detail in debate. I do hope that the House leader will send this to committee so we can investigate some of the details that I've addressed today—the uniqueness of Toronto, should these powers be given to other municipalities as well, and is this the right balance of authority? Most importantly, while Ms Wynne has brought this forward, I'm interested to see what kind of support she has, particularly from cabinet and her colleagues from across the province, if this is the approach the government's going to take on this important issue.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege to speak to this issue and to commend the member for Don Valley West for bringing this initiative forward. I have known Ms Wynne for a long time. In fact, I first met her around the whole turmoil that was involved in the Citizens for Local Democracy and the forceful—forcible, not forceful—dismantling of 150 years of local democracy in the municipalities of Toronto, Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, York and East York.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Hard to forget that legacy.

Mr Prue: The people in my area have never, ever forgotten what happened to them and to their mayor, to their council, to their local democracy—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Well, their mayor is standing here. But they have never forgotten what has happened to their community and their ability to make changes within the community. Although the people of the amalgamated city of Toronto still have, I guess, some vestige of democracy—they get to go out and vote every three years for the mayor and council—much of which they used to hold sacred is now gone. I will tell you that there are many differences between Toronto and every other municipality, particularly the smaller municipalities and towns in Ontario.

Do you know that in most local towns you can go and see your mayor or councillor? You would often know who they were. They were people in the community. Today in Toronto, that's almost impossible. It is a difficult enough prospect to go and meet the mayor of a city of 2.5 million people, with the responsibility that person has, but it is equally getting difficult to go and see your municipal councillor in Toronto, who represents 58,000 people. That is more than most of the municipalities have in total in Ontario. Each councillor in Toronto is responsible for an average of 58,000 people. The days when the local councillors used to go out and talk to the people are long gone, because the local councillors in Toronto now all have three or four staff people who are the intermediaries. Those are the ones whom the citizens meet. The days of having meetings—

Mr Baird: You have staff members?

Mr Prue: No, no. The days of having meetings—I'm getting heckled from the Tories, and I'm not surprised. The days of the meetings of citizens, and citizens' input, are also long gone. There used to be hundreds or thousands of meetings held in the former municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the six municipalities in Toronto. Today, those are numbered in the tens or twenties. The number of meetings where citizens have input has been hugely truncated. The contact with civic workers has now gone completely down, and you no longer know who the civic workers are.

There was a time in York, East York and Toronto when people knew their local civic workers. They worked in and around the community. They knew of people who would have difficulty bringing their garbage to the bin. They knew when the parks needed to be cleaned. They knew when the grass was growing too high. Now all of that is centralized downtown, and people no longer know the individual neighbourhoods and communities in which they work. They're sent out to different places every day.

There is no longer an opportunity for input on boards and committees. I can speak best about East York. In East York, prior to amalgamation, we had about 400 people who served on the boards and committees of our municipality, on the skating rinks board, the safety council, the committee of health, the committee of adjustment—all those things that municipalities have—400 individuals who lined up every year to be on those boards and committees. Do you know how many people are on the boards and committees from East York in the city of Toronto today?

Mr Marchese: Forty?

Mr Prue: Three. We've gone from 400 civic-minded people giving of themselves for their community down to three who represent us in the city of Toronto. This is what has happened to the people of Toronto. They still have a vote, but they have nothing else. They have no control over the agenda of their local municipalities, particularly on planning issues. The decisions are made by a community council which, to a large extent, does not reflect their neighbourhood or their former municipality.

In fact, East York was carved up like the proverbial turkey, with that section that Ms Wynne now represents being in the North York community council and the rest of East York being in the downtown central community council. The community is not there any more.

I welcome the bill. We totally support what is in this bill. But I have to tell you that I am not naive as to the prospects of this bill being passed. I asked the minister yesterday and the day before in estimates a whole bunch of questions about what is contained in Bill 120. I asked the minister whether he would support the provisions, or whether his bill that is coming forward later this same year would contain the same or different provisions.

I have to tell you that on a couple of the aspects, the ward boundaries and the number of wards, he was in agreement that the city of Toronto should have that

responsibility. He was also in agreement that the composition or powers of the community councils could be changed by the city of Toronto. He thought that was a good thing.

But then he was not nearly so positive when I asked him questions on the last four aspects. He was not nearly so positive on the city of Toronto setting its own election date, should that election date differ from the rest of the province—because we all know that takes place on the second Monday in November, right across Ontario. I questioned him on how he would react if Toronto set a different date, and he didn't seem to like that very much.

He also didn't like the change of the term of office. If Toronto, for example, chose a four-year term of office versus three years everywhere else, it would also skew the election dates and they would be held in alternate years. So he wasn't too pleased about that.

He wasn't too pleased about the election finance rules. I'm going to deal more with those and some questions I have for Ms Wynne and perhaps for committee on those.

And he was not very pleased about the central voters' list.

I asked him, more importantly—because, although they're important issues, I think they are not germane to the central issue here, and that is that the amalgamated city of Toronto is not working in the best interests of the citizens who live here—I asked him questions about Kawartha Lakes and why they have backed down on a democratic referendum which they pledged to honour prior to the election and which they now refuse to honour, to the consternation of the people there.

I asked him about the other communities that are trying to mobilize and get changes made to the city of Hamilton and to Chatham and to other places around the province, and he was not willing to bend on this.

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I asked him about the referendum in Quebec, that took place in June of this year, in which 30-some municipalities took back some of the powers following amalgamation, literally got most of the powers back for their local communities, and whether he would consider doing that for Toronto or Kawartha Lakes or Hamilton or Ottawa or any other place in Ontario. His response was a very flat no, that the government has other agendas and other items and they are not going to be looking at that. This was extremely disappointing to me and, I think, to all of the people who care about local democracy.

If I was a cynical person—I don't think I am, but if I was cynical, I would have to tell you that I think this bill may in part be to see and gauge what the reaction is from this Legislature and, perhaps more importantly, what the reaction is from other municipal leaders across Ontario. But I'm not, so I'm going to be favourable.

The most contentious aspect, and I want to raise this today, and I think it is important to raise it in the Legislature, is section 8.2, which sets out that the city of Toronto will be able to make changes to the Municipal Elections Act and, where they are in conflict, overrule that. I want to tell you, I think we have to tread very

carefully on this, and I'm hoping that when it goes to committee there will be some really good discussion, because section 8.2, the election campaign finances, sections 66 through 82 as set out here, talks about things like contributions, penalties, expenses, the election campaign period, the duties of the candidate, whether or not you can launder money, all of these things. They are all here, and I would be very reluctant to give the city power that is in conflict with the general principles of this. If there is a conflict, perhaps it should read the other way around. I think back to Mr Lyons, when he laundered the money. He was caught laundering the money and the OPP decided he did launder the money, but they weren't going to change him. That provision is in here. If they took that out, that would allow for money laundering. Quite frankly, I don't want to see that.

In the absence, though, of all of this, and I want to give my friend from Trinity-Spadina at least five—well, he's going to get four and a half minutes, anyway. This bill would allow some of the vestiges of local democracy to return. It will allow, if passed, the community councils to have a real voice, and I would hope a final voice, on those aspects which reflect totally neighbourhood concerns. They ought not to be debated by others. Quite frankly, when I was on the city of Toronto council, it was kind of bizarre that I was passing and voting yes or no on road signs in Etobicoke when I didn't know where the streets were and knew nothing about them. There are huge debates there, and it is nonsensical. It should be dealt with very locally whenever possible.

In saying that, I would ask the members on all sides of the House to support this bill, not necessarily for what it contains, because there are some flaws in it, but because the people of Toronto need a democracy that works. We used to be the envy of the world. People used to come to Toronto to study a city that was called "New York run by the Swiss." They used to come here to look at how democracy worked. Well, I want to tell you, my colleagues, no one comes to look at how this city works any more, and we in this Legislature need to do everything we can to return Toronto to its days of glory, when it was a vibrant and wonderful democracy and when people actually had some input in their local government.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Thank you, to the member for Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, for bringing this bill forward and for all of her work in local democracy issues through the years.

I want to begin by saying that I will certainly be supporting this bill. I think it's very important for this Legislature to have a discussion on these kinds of issues. I think it will be very helpful to hear comments from MPPs on all sides of the House on this very important issue, an issue that's important not only to Toronto but, frankly, to the entire province.

I support this bill because I think it is time to recognize that Toronto is large enough and mature enough as a level of government to be able to govern itself in a lot of different ways, to be given the tools to be able to sustain itself, to be given the tools to be able to govern itself

without always having to come hat in hand to the province on each and every thing. Ward boundaries, the number of wards, the number of councillors, the names of wards, these are things that I think we can easily agree the city of Toronto, and probably all municipalities, should have control over.

There are a few things in this bill that I have some concern over, not great concern but some concern. That doesn't lead me not to support the bill; it leads me to suggest that this is something we should be talking about, probably at a later time.

I'll give you an example: I think that municipal elections should be province-wide. I think that's a way to probably encourage better participation in elections. If an election is held province-wide, it will get more attention right across the province, people will know an election is coming and people are probably a little more excited about it.

Aside from that, most of the other things in this bill are certainly worth taking a good, close look at, if not fully supporting. When it comes down to it, we may well get all members of the Legislature to support this bill because of the thrust of what's behind it.

Some of the things that motivated me to try to get here in the first place, to seek the support of the people of Scarborough Centre, were the frustration I felt as a nine-year member of originally Scarborough council and then Toronto city council; the frustration I felt about the way Toronto and other municipalities were being treated by the government of the day; frustration with the fact that we had an unwanted amalgamation thrust upon us; the frustration with the fact hundreds of millions of dollars were downloaded on the city of Toronto from the government of the day; frustration with the fact that the government failed to give Toronto the tools, the access to resources they needed to deal with this downloading; and frustration with the fact every time we went to Toronto for help, we got into a finger-pointing exercise, where it was always Toronto's fault that we had problems, where there was no recognition of responsibility from people here at Queen's Park.

So I think that times have changed, and changed for the better. Thank God we now have a Premier who gets it when it comes to Toronto, a Premier who's willing to go to bat for Toronto, a Premier who recognizes that what's good for Toronto is good for the entire province. Thank goodness we have a government in place that's been able to get a transit agreement with the federal government for over a billion dollars—unprecedented—going to Toronto. Thank goodness in the last budget we came forward with—and some of the acrimony and finger-pointing and blame we had going from one side to the other—we were able to come to an agreement with Toronto, and \$90 million flowed to Toronto for public transit in that city. Thank goodness, when it comes to things like the gas tax, we'll soon be seeing that flow through to cities across this province for public transit, something that Toronto is going to benefit from immensely, something that I think we'll all be very proud

of. Thank goodness in the last budget we moved, in funding public health, from 50% to 75%. These are all very significant changes.

The relationship between the city and the province has probably not been better for generations, but we've got more to do, and thus we're getting into discussions with the city of Toronto on a review of the City of Toronto Act. The points that are made here in this debate will certainly be taken into consideration in those discussions. But I can tell you one thing: The city of Toronto will get the tools it needs, will get access to the resources it needs to be successful as a city, to be able to compete with other cities its size around the world. And not only will Toronto benefit from that, every nook and cranny of this province will benefit from a prosperous, successful Toronto, which would not have happened when the Tories were in power but will happen under our leadership.

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Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased and privileged to be speaking on the bill. I have to say that I want to congratulate Ms Wynne, the member for Don Valley West, for bringing forward this bill. I have a great deal of respect for the ideals and the hard work Ms Wynne has done in the committee she worked for, Citizens for Local Democracy, along with many notable people in the community.

This bill, in my view, as the member for Sarnia-Lambton, not from Toronto—I'm 300 kilometres from here—symbolizes a better democracy for more responsible and accountable governance for our municipalities. As I say, Toronto in and of itself is a leader, and should be a catalyst and a protagonist for this type of autonomy throughout the province. I say this because we are in an era today where we hear over and over again about the new deals for cities. We're in a new era where yes, there is a maturity; we're in the 21st century. The 21st century in Ontario, in my view, is a new era of co-operation between and among different levels of government. There's a lot less tolerance for the Big Brother approach. There has to be a maturity, and that maturity can only evolve if there is more autonomy provided to municipalities, whether it be Toronto or other sizes of communities in this province.

I was listening to the member from Erie-Lincoln, and I have to say he must have a very short memory. When we were in this House talking about amalgamation, I remember the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time using what is termed as the "Henry VIII clause," which gives to the minister unprecedented powers so that they can dictate what should happen to municipalities. It was for the amalgamation. It was the most undemocratic process I have ever seen. I did some research on the Henry VIII clause. It actually goes against the principles of democracy in a parliamentary system.

I have to say that I appreciate the member's comments. I'm pleased that he's going to support this bill, but I have to say that we endured, with great regret, the process of amalgamation that was used in this province.

Again, they scrambled the egg and we cannot unscramble the egg. We have to deal with it as we have it today.

I believe it's important that we have this discussion about the relationship of municipalities to the other levels of government. Why? Because other countries in the world know that the hubbub of energy is at the community level. We have to have autonomy in those municipalities so that they can generate the energy and they don't feel they're always tied to another level of decision-making.

Toronto, as the largest centre in Ontario, is our economic engine. I believe it's our artistic, if you want to call it, leader. It has many amenities, and it certainly tends to lead the rest of the province just by its sheer size. That's not to say that we don't recognize that Ontario is a collective of diverse communities, municipalities, all of different sizes and makeups. Nonetheless we have to treat Toronto, by its size and as a leader, distinctly as the largest centre in Ontario.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to speak on the bill, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 1997. Certainly the comments made by the former mayor of East York, Michael Prue, and the member from Scarborough Centre, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and who served on Toronto council, must be respected and should form part of this debate in terms of what they're saying.

The vestiges of local democracy are something we all want, whatever community we come from. That's something that I think has unanimous support in this House.

The member from Scarborough Centre makes a good point, though: There have to be some provincial standards in some areas, such as his point with respect to the timing of elections for municipalities across the province. I think there were also some comments made by the member from Beaches-East York in terms of finances, certainly a very sensitive area at any time.

Term limits are also something that I think have to be looked at from a provincial perspective. The way this bill is drafted, it could give the city of Toronto the ability to set its own term limits. They could essentially set term lengths of four, eight or even 12 years. I think there have to be some standards in terms of what is in the best interests of the public and also in the best interests of the members who are being elected by the public. Who knows the likely scenario they're talking about here? Currently, the provincial standard is three years. At one time it was one year and was extended to two. Now it is three years.

I am not too comfortable in terms moving too far off in areas such as timing of elections, term limits and finances without the province being involved. Quite frankly, municipalities and municipal councils have a say in this area already. Municipal councils are directly elected by the taxpayers and may be at a stage where they could determine ward boundaries and numbers of representatives. Currently, they may have these changes made, subject to provincial approval through the Ontario

Municipal Board. When I was on city council in Barrie, we changed the ward boundaries and also the number of councillors in the city of Barrie, and it wasn't that difficult to do. So I don't think that's giving the city of Toronto greater powers than they already have in this situation.

The provisions that give the city control of election financing may result in the city restricting campaign donations and providing tax subsidies for candidates. There is already an issue in terms of the benefits that incumbents have, no matter whether it's in Toronto, in Barrie or in other areas in terms of the funding they have just because they're incumbents and also the funding they can draw because they're incumbents. There also have to be some provincial standards and some fairness to people who want to get into the elective process.

There's one thing that caught me in this bill. Most bills have a vision in terms of what they are trying to bring about, but I noticed there is no preamble in terms of the intent or vision of this particular piece of legislation. I think that's something that most people would be looking for in any piece of legislation, in terms of how you interpret such a piece of legislation. I know the courts always look at the preamble. Certainly, when you are dealing with something as far-reaching as this, which will probably have to have further review, you want a preamble or vision statement of what this is really intended to accomplish. Quite frankly, I really don't know what it intends to accomplish other than some procedural changes with respect to council, ward boundaries, voting subdivisions etc. I think we have to look at that in a very clear manner in terms of what we are trying to accomplish here. Frankly, you could have something that other municipalities or other large urban centres would also like to take out of this situation.

The city of Toronto is unique. It's very important to the economic well-being of this province. It's very important in terms of the direction it takes in a lot of areas in terms of leadership. As Mr Prue says, we should be looking at trying to deal with the vestiges of local democracy and what people feel is important for this community. If that's the intent and vision this bill has, then that's something that can be supported, certainly by me.

I would say in closing that I respect the municipal experience of the members from Beaches-East York and Scarborough Centre. I think they bring a lot to this discussion. I will certainly be looking at supporting this bill.

Mr Marchese: I do support the initiative by the member from Don Valley West and would support it going to committee, quite obviously, because that's where we need to raise not only the issues that the member from Beaches-East York talked about, but indeed many other issues that I suspect a lot of citizens of Toronto and beyond would want to raise.

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I support the comments made by the member for Beaches-East York about subsection 8.2(3), where it

speaks about the ability of the bylaws to override the Municipal Act. He raises the concern around so many of the issues which the bylaws would be able to override. I, like him, would be profoundly worried about some of those sections. So sending that to committee would give us an opportunity to reflect a little more clearly about those powers and whether or not we agree, whether or not she agrees, or whether or not even the minister agrees.

I would point out as well that we are not dealing at all in this bill with the problem of what kind of financial powers the city of Toronto or, indeed, any other city should have. As you know, with the downloading of many services over the eight years, at least under the legacy of the Conservative government, cities are broke. They can only rely on property taxes to be able to pay for the services they provide to their citizens in their local communities. We know the property taxes simply are not only inadequate to pay for the services that they have to provide, but also equally unfair, because it hits people disproportionately in terms of the kinds of income that certain people have versus others who are very wealthy.

So there are inequalities in the system. Cities are broke. They can't continue to rely on or beg the provinces to give them the money they need to be able to function. So we need to come up with some formula that allows cities to be able to survive on their own, without having to rely on and/or beg provinces to give them the support they need, and having to rely on governments from time to time to decide that they're going to download more and more services to the city without adequate funds and be left scrambling, having to try to find the money.

Another concern of mine that is not dealt with here is the fact that, from time to time, there is either some fraudulent activity going on during municipal elections and/or some irregularities happening in the wards by way of how proxy votes are signed and by whom—and any other kind of irregularity, financial or otherwise. How do we deal with that? In most cases, they get to the city in some form or another and get squashed. We need an enforcement mechanism and/or a person either at the city or the province who is independent and is able to deal with fraud or irregularity in some way. Without that, this bill would be very weak.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I think that the member from Don Valley East, Kathleen Wynne, has an outstanding proven record of civic service and volunteerism beyond and above anything I've seen in my 25 years of public life. She certainly has demonstrated she has a deep passion for her neighbourhood and her city, and I think this bill is a reflection of that.

I would like to mention that John Sewell is here also. He, unlike a lot of so-called leaders in the city of Toronto or in government, was not afraid to stand up and say that the megacity legislation was wrong. He had the courage to do it; others did not. My colleague from East York, Michael Prue, the former mayor, was another one who

had the courage to stand up and say it was wrong. Also, the late Frank Faubert had the courage to stand up to the former government and say it was wrong. We should remember the people who didn't have the courage, who went along with this abomination called the megacity bill of 1997.

It's been proven that it was, as we said in opposition, a financial disaster for the city of Toronto. It was a democratic disaster, and we have been proven right. It never solved anything for the city of Toronto, and this is an attempt by the member from Don Valley East to try and redress those wrongs. She has that conviction, and she is bringing forth some of her solutions. I would like to say that perhaps, in noticing my opposition, the spokesman for John Tory, the new leader of the Conservatives, should stand up in this Legislature and apologize to the people of Toronto for what his party did to the city of Toronto. That's what he should do.

We all know the City of Toronto Act, 1997, was nothing but a Trojan horse for downloading. That's why they did it. They wanted to download public health, child care and housing on the backs of local property taxpayers. That's what they did. Also, we should know there was no intention to improve democracy. It shut down democracy. Most of this bill deals with trying to redress those wrongs. Obviously, a city like Toronto should get the same rights other municipalities have. That's the main focus of this bill and that's why it should be supported.

Perhaps we should look at some of the real things that have been done so far in trying to redress those wrongs. We have uploaded public health 50% to the province. We are passing through the gas tax, which is going to help. OMB reform is coming and more local democracy. Toronto will get more choice, at the local level, on property tax assessment. The Toronto District School Board was taken over by a provincial supervisor and stripped of all its rights. The parents in this city had no rights over public education for two years under the previous regime. We gave that power back locally.

I know democracy is sometimes messy, and sometimes people in East York or York or North York used to like to be heard, but that's part of what we get paid for, to tend and nurture democracy. That is why the member for Don Valley West is saying it's part of our job to ensure democracy gets restored in Toronto and improved. This bill is a significant step in that direction. There is a lot more work to do. It by no means solves all the problems the city of Toronto has, but at least it's a step in the right direction.

The final thing I remember, in reflection, is that we had just come back from 10,000 of us marching down Yonge Street protesting the Conservative government's action and saying the megacity was going to be a disaster. The next day, you picked up a major newspaper in Toronto and there was basically no mention of the 10,000. On the front page was a big headline: "Megacity Bill Will Save the City"—I don't know—" \$5 Billion." It never saved the \$5 billion.

You should have listened to the people who marched down Yonge Street and said it was going to be a disaster. Let's fix the disaster.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Wynne, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms Wynne: I want to thank all my colleagues in the House for their comments. It's very gratifying to hear people like the member for Beaches-East York talk about the on-the-ground issues that haven't been addressed in the last number of years because of what happened in this city and how we might repair some of that damage.

I'm absolutely thrilled that there has been an epiphany in the Progressive Conservative Party. I think Mr Tory is working his magic, because if we're going to have support for this bill, that's terrific. It's just too bad it didn't happen earlier.

The other thing I want to say is that there have been comments made about some changes that could be made to this bill. I completely accept that it's not perfect and that there could be changes. That's why we need to start this debate. There can be further debate about how to fine-tune, but the point is that we need to get going on it. I think that to have a substantial debate about what local democracy looks like in this province is a terrific thing for us to initiate as a Legislature. I'm really happy to be part of that, and I look forward to the vote thank you for the support.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HIGHWAY MEMORIALS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 33 standing in the name of Mr Yakabuski. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

CITY OF TORONTO AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall deal next with ballot item number 34.

Ms Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 120. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this is referred to committee of the whole.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Mr Speaker, I'd like to refer it to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Wynne has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Is it agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Starvation funding of only 1.2% is the wrong prescription for Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington. This hospital is already considered one of the most efficient hospitals in this province, having gone through two substantive reviews, and yet they're showing a shortfall of \$8.4 million.

Dalton McGuinty just doesn't get it. A full 75% of hospital costs are allocated to salaries. The only way for hospitals to achieve the Liberal health restraint targets is by firing nurses, cutting services and closing beds.

During the last election, the Liberals accused the Tories of not spending enough on health care. In fact, our government spent 12.9% more in health spending in 2003-04, compared to the current Liberals at only 4.3%. We spent three times more. Smitherman now criticizes the Tories for years of increasing hospital funding.

Our community is outraged, and here is what Dr Ben Carruthers, chief of staff at the hospital, said, "Our doctors and nurses, who deliver care to those patients who require hospitalization, surgery, obstetrical care or specialized rehabilitation, are not prepared to reduce or curtail the medical care that is requested of them. They will not be party to deciding which services our community should do without."

Hats off to the medical staff, our board of directors and the management of Joseph Brant hospital and a community who refuses to submit to this government's restraint. The bottom line is patient care in the city of Burlington, and this government better realize that.

IRENE MURDOCH

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): On Monday, we marked Persons Day in this assembly, and among the names of the champions for the rights of women was one reluctant farm woman, Irene Murdoch.

In 1973, after divorcing James Murdoch, the Supreme Court ruled that this Alberta farm woman was not entitled to half of the ranch property that was owned by James, this in spite of the fact that for 25 years she had done more than half of the work, often single-handedly, and made a key contribution to its increased value. In the court's words, Mrs Murdoch had simply been doing "the work done by any ranch wife." The court's decision caused a national outcry that resulted in reforms to marital property laws in every province.

Until the Murdoch decision, women going through divorce had to financially contribute to the purchase of the property in order to be entitled to any equity. The Murdoch case also drew attention to the legal and social state of farm women in Canada, and was the spark that started a new era in the farm women's movement. Farm women commanded respect and recognition for their

contribution to agriculture and a role in the industry's decision-making process.

But Irene never benefited from the change to the property law. She got none of the proceeds from the sale of the couple's ranch, and her last days were spent alone, ill and in poverty.

NATIONAL DENTAL HYGIENISTS WEEK

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I'm honoured to stand before this House today in recognition of National Dental Hygienists Week, which runs from October 18 to 22.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Smile.

Mr Flaherty: The member says, "Smile." You're right, I should.

Over the years, the role of dental hygienists has evolved. Years ago, dental hygienists were responsible for cleaning and polishing teeth and promoting good oral health. Today, dental hygienists not only perform those functions, but also provide a process of care that involves assessing condition, planning and implementing treatment, and evaluation of care programs.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind the Premier of the promise he made to the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association on September 29, 2003. He promised to act on the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council's recommendation to permit dental hygienists to clean patients' teeth without a dentist's order. I encourage the Premier to keep his promise and support Bill 116, which I introduced, to remove the restriction that currently prohibits dental hygienists from cleaning patients' teeth without first having to obtain a dentist's order.

This bill will allow more Ontarians to obtain affordable and accessible oral hygiene care, particularly residents in long-term-care facilities, non-ambulatory residents in rural and remote areas, and individuals without private dental insurance.

As we celebrate National Dental Hygienists Week, it is important that we acknowledge the important role that dental hygienists play in our communities, particularly with vulnerable people.

MARIE PERROTTA

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Each year in our community, the Beaches community, we choose a person to be the citizen of the year. This is the fourth year we have done so. We gathered on a very rainy and cold afternoon on Saturday to induct the newest member, Marie Perrotta. We placed her name on the walkway, and people spoke of her contributions to our community.

She is the founder of a group in the Beach called Pegasus. It has spread out, in the 10 years that she has been involved, to encompass now four communities. It is an organization that looks after developmentally challenged adults. There was none in our community when

Marie Perrotta started 10 years ago. Now, as I have said, there are four communities.

Her nominator wrote a wonderful thing, I think far better than I could say it. I'd like to read it into the record:

"It has taken Marie many years of hard work and she has overcome many obstacles that face a person trying to make the government and citizens aware of the needs of our special population. After they leave the educational system at 21, they would be forced into group homes or stay at home with their aging parents and their quality of life would be lonely with no purpose. But Marie with her years of hard work has enabled them to leave their homes each day and be bused to nearby centres for fun and companionship.

"Marie has four centres and a store in operation at this time and is the primary fundraiser. She also gives many hours as a volunteer in schools, recreation centres and wherever she is needed. Even though she is a wife and mother and her life is full, she is still very active in the community.

"She has taken the great left-outs of society and brought them into the life of the community. She has shown us the miracle of integration. The litmus test is the impact she has on this community."

My congratulations to her. The Beaches community is very well served.

MARKHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Today, it is with great pleasure that I rise to congratulate the Markham Public Library, whose recent nomination for this year's Angus Mowat Award of Excellence, announced earlier this week at the launch of Ontario Public Library Week.

The Markham Public Library is being recognized for its development of the Roving Information Navigator, an on-the-spot tool that assists library patrons with their searches for information and resources.

I would like to thank Minister Meilleur for coming to Unionville to launch Ontario Public Library Week. This past Monday, I had the privilege of assisting Minister Meilleur in announcing the KidsRead Ontario program. This dynamic new program allows children across Ontario to order books in both English and French cost-free from 750 titles provided by Ontario's internationally renowned children's book publishers. I believe KidsRead Ontario to be a vital service for Ontario's children. It will provide them access to resource and tools that they require in order to give them a solid foundation in writing and literacy.

Ontario's public libraries are an excellent resource for children of all economic backgrounds. They house millions of pieces of information that open up worlds of possibilities, opportunities and adventures for children. Last year alone, 69 million Ontarians visited our public libraries. This year, the Ministry of Culture will continue to ensure access through the almost \$39 million of funding to Ontario's public libraries. This is another im-

portant example of our government's commitment to improving writing and literacy skills for Ontario's children.

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MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Confirmed sightings of the bully minister rampaging in hospital corridors continue to surface. In a Toronto Star article entitled, "What Next for 'Furious George'?" it is reported that he has gone outside his Toronto habitat and visited North Bay and Ottawa.

In North Bay, we learn from the Star, that the minister threatened officials if they persisted with a campaign for more money for their new hospital. He said he would drop that project to favour another from a hospital board that was more obedient to the king of the hospitals. Then he drove to Ottawa, where the minister read the riot act to hospital officials who dared to criticize his legislation and reportedly went nose to nose with one of them.

Today, a new threat: the hospital cafeteria workers, janitors and other support staff. King George has decreed their incomes to be too high. So while hospital administrators, nurses and janitors are now walking on eggshells, terrified to speak out, the bully minister, Mr Smitherman, says he's loving it.

To help those who have been bullied by the minister, bring your stories to our attention. We've set up an electronic bully hotline: Smithermanbulliedme@hotmail.com. It's open to all Ontarians, or if they work in the hospital system, or even to Liberal caucus colleagues. We want to hear about it, because Dalton McGuinty—he couldn't care less. Smithermanbulliedme@hotmail.com.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): It'll come as no surprise to the constituents of Perth-Middlesex that I am proud of our government. Today we're moving forward on another one of our commitments. We're adding 1,000 new police officers to forces across Ontario.

When we formed the government, we inherited an overburdened system lacking in adequate police officers. Now, we all know that the Tories talk tough on crime, but the reality is they did very little about it. Look at the facts. The number of police officers per capita declined by 8% over their tenure. The Provincial Auditor noted that 10,000 arrest warrants were left outstanding, many of them for serious violent offences. When it comes down to it, they promised to hire more police officers but never followed through. Hiring a new police officer to replace a retiring police officer just maintains the status quo.

We're doing things differently. We're making all Ontarians' safety a priority. We're changing the status quo that we inherited from the Tories. We're investing in the prevention of youth crime. We're cracking down on

guns, gangs, organized crime and marijuana grow ops. We're pushing Ottawa to strengthen dangerous offender laws. We're working hard to protect the victims of domestic violence and protecting our children from pornographers. We're getting both tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise to take this opportunity to highlight some of the very positive changes our government is delivering in the health care sector. The McGuinty government is committed to providing Ontarians with the health care they deserve, and we are taking the right approach to ensure this is accomplished.

We have invested approximately \$1 billion since taking office to help hospitals, and we are working with them to help balance their budgets. Our government will help establish a new Ontario health protection and promotion agency and increase the independence of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We will also immediately establish a provincial infectious disease advisory committee.

We are making significant investment to provide 21,000 more Ontarians with home care this year. We will bring 2,400 new full-time nurses into the health care sector, and we are making doctors more accessible in communities across the province. We are bringing back long-term care standards.

Our government is strengthening the public health system by taking immediate action. Ontarians can be confident in the leadership and guidance of our health minister and our Premier. The people of Ontario will see real improvement in their public health care system, and that begins from the day of the election.

NURSES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I rise today to draw the attention of the House to some of this government's accomplishments in the health care sector. We provided funding for 2,400 full-time nursing positions. We did so because we believe nurses, far from being misplaced Hula Hoops, are actually the very heart of the health care system. We're committed to increasing the quality of working life for nurses. The \$14 million that our government has invested in safety equipment, like ceiling-mounted bed lifts, was a good start. Compare this to the record of the previous government, which fired thousands of nurses, at a cost of \$400 million. Tragically, the cumulative poor treatment caused 1,700 registered nurses to leave the profession in 2001 alone.

We're investing money in long-term care and we're making it available to 21,000 more people—a far cry from the previous government, whose senseless cuts to home care forced 115,000 Ontarians to go without care or receive it in an institution. We're also investing \$119

million in long-term care and have frozen the amount that residents of long-term-care facilities must pay—a far cry from the heartless 15% increase the previous government sought to inflict.

In one short year, our government has not only improved but is transforming health care to ensure its long-term sustainability—a far cry from the pattern of spiralling downward out of control.

ANNUAL REPORT,
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER
OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2003-04 annual report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): On Tuesday, I had the pleasure of joining the Recycling Council of Ontario here at Queen's Park to help kick off Waste Reduction Week. The Recycling Council of Ontario has long been at the forefront of waste reduction in Ontario. The council is a forceful advocate of a belief shared by the McGuinty government: that protecting our environment is fundamental to our health and way of life.

For our government, Waste Reduction Week is a time to focus on making Ontario communities safe, clean and livable. It is a time to intensify our efforts to reduce the amount of waste that goes for disposal. Everyone has an important role to play in protecting our precious land, water and air. The people of Ontario know this, and they are taking action. One way is by enthusiastically embracing the blue box. Upon taking office, I approved the blue box program plan. For the first time ever, industry is required to pay for 50% of the cost of operating the blue box program. Earlier this month, as part of the second phase of industry funding, Stewardship Ontario delivered cheques totalling more than \$4.5 million to 189 Ontario municipalities to pay 50% of the net cost of their blue box programs.

On Tuesday, I also helped launched curbside collection of compostable materials here in the city of Toronto, East York and York. The extremely successful green bin program is helping the city greatly reduce the amount of waste that it sends to a landfill. Good progress is being made in Ontario, but we have to face reality. We still generate too much waste and send it for disposal. Future population growth will put even further stresses on our waste management system.

The McGuinty government is providing the leadership that Ontario needs to be a waste diversion leader in the 21st century. We have set aggressive targets for diverting waste. We are examining a number of ways that we can improve upon Ontario's diversion rates.

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One area where action is needed is electric and electronic products. The scope of these products is vast, from computers and fax machines to CD players and photocopiers. Diverting these materials from disposal means preventing thousands of tonnes of metal, plastic, wiring and harmful chemicals from ending up as waste in a landfill. I intend to designate electronic waste for recycling, and I will shortly ask Waste Diversion Ontario to prepare a plan for this sector.

We are looking at streamlining the approvals process for new waste diversion technologies. We are exploring opportunities to reduce packaging and increase recycled content in products. Ontarians need to understand the bigger picture when it comes to the benefits of waste diversion. Waste diversion reduces the amount of materials being dumped in landfills, but it does much more than that: It saves the energy that's required to dispose of materials; it eliminates air emissions from trucks that transport garbage; it eliminates emissions from manufacturing; recycled products take less energy to create than raw material products; and it reduces the risk of future ground and surface water pollution.

We usually think about waste in terms of our health and environment, but waste diversion also makes sense from a business perspective. It is sustainable and productive, while waste is unsustainable and unproductive.

I want to conclude by citing some terrific examples of innovative waste reduction in Ontario.

Many of the honourable members will have received telephone calls at home from the Canadian Diabetes Association's Clothesline program, which collects used clothing and reusable household items. Most of us are so happy to help the association with its good work that we do not realize how much waste it is diverting. The numbers are quite impressive. For just the top seven cities in Ontario, Clothesline diverts more than 220,000 kilograms of material from disposal in landfill.

I have met with many other people and organizations from across Ontario who are finding new and innovative ways to reduce waste. In Ottawa, I met with Ralph Rick. He runs a company that recovers and recycles glass from restaurant wine bottles. In Niagara Falls, I saw how one company is successfully tapping into landfill gas to create clean energy for nearby industry. Next week in Toronto, I will take part in the national launch of a cell-phone recycling program. In my own riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, the Land O'Lakes Communications Network is setting up the first e-waste recovery centre in eastern Ontario. Coordinator Jim MacPherson is using the experience he gained as a partner in the Computers for Schools program in Sharbot Lake, which has put more than 9,000 discarded computers back into operation.

Clearly, great work is being done in Ontario. Let us take the opportunity afforded by Waste Reduction Week to strengthen our efforts to reduce waste and protect Ontario's precious health and environment.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I want to thank the minister for finally recognizing waste diversion week with her statement today. It's already Thursday, and I was beginning to think the government had misplaced its calendar. The school kids were out in front of the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday of this week. By the time this shows up in my local papers—that'll be Wednesday of next week—it'll be Canada's Healthy Workplace Week.

Timeline confusions are nothing new with this minister, who told us last December in the Legislature that the government was committing to a 2005 target for the 60% waste diversion goal. Later, the minister pushed that back to 2008. That's a three-year delay. It's actually after the next election.

We certainly recognize waste diversion week. It's important. We also recognize the important steps that have been taken to help reduce impact. It was just over two years ago—two years and four months, to be exact—that the Ontario PC government set the wheels in motion to pave the way for much of the province's waste reduction direction. This minister seems content only to keep in motion the wheels on 125 tractor-trailers a day carrying GTA waste into Michigan. This is waste diversion to Michigan.

On June 14, 2002, we announced a new era in waste diversion in Ontario with the passage of the Waste Diversion Act. I sincerely hope this government doesn't think about repealing this act, like they did with the disabilities act, to give themselves some credit for a new direction.

The Waste Diversion Act was an essential piece of legislation to promote not only recycling but also reduction and reuse of waste, and to establish the permanent non-government corporation called Waste Diversion Ontario, again to develop, implement and fund these kinds of diversion programs. I must underline the importance of this step, as it set in stone that this present government maintain a commitment to reduce the impact on our environment through waste diversion.

That's why it was so great to see all the schoolchildren out in front of Queen's Park on Tuesday morning for the launch of Waste Reduction Week. They beat the minister by a few days. Children will be vital to the future success of any programs this government may come up with.

I'll also mention the Junkyard Symphony. They were out there on Tuesday morning. Some of us heard them at about 7 o'clock, spreading their message through junkyard-inspired tunes and junkyard-inspired instruments.

As we know, this is also an important week for waste diversion in the city of Toronto: the launch of the green box organic waste diversion program. This has been in the works for quite some time.

The minister mentioned e-waste. I suggest the minister tour the Noranda plant in Toronto. They recycle computers.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Been there, done that.

Mr Barrett: So we've both been there. That's great.

As the minister will know, they recycle cellphones, computers and photocopy machines. Noranda is in the business of metals. Through this plant they recover aluminum, steel and copper.

I'll mention that in this essential step toward reaching this 60% waste diversion goal, I continue to have concerns about the minister's shifting timelines. Last December it was 2005 and this year it's 2008, and we see no actual financial plan to reach that goal.

I will mention, as I did before, that the waste crisis continues to draw closer at the Sarnia-Windsor-Michigan border: the very real possibility of 125 tractor-trailer loads of garbage being turned away. Presidential candidate John Kerry has taken the position: "We shouldn't import trash from other countries. I plan to review this issue in the first 120 days of my presidency." It's 12 days till the US federal election. Add 120, Minister, and you've got 132 days to do something about those 125 tractor-trailer loads of Toronto waste. I hope it's not just to have them start dumping it in London or the Halton region.

I remind the government that it's a laudable goal to divert 60%. Don't forget about the other 40%.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My heavens, Minister, is that all there is today: the recycling of old announcements and intentions? Nothing introduced today to move us forward—absolutely nothing.

You've made proclamations for 60% waste diversion, but you have failed to introduce the simplest measures today to achieve that goal, and this on the day when the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario came out and specifically referred to the one billion aluminum cans that are entering landfills, not the blue boxes, and also the industrial, commercial and institutional programs that are supposed to be regulated by the ministry—to have it go there—but they're not enforcing their own laws.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario was very clear on that. Aluminum is one of the most easily recyclable materials. The Environmental Commissioner is echoing what I, and others, have been saying for a long time: You need a deposit-refund system when it comes to keeping those cans out of landfills. The other thing the commissioner said is that the blue box program is in jeopardy because those cans aren't going there. They are worth \$1,800, and he said that without that funding for the blue box, the program is actually in jeopardy.

1400

The minister says she's going to ask for an electronic waste bill to be put in place—ask, after a year. We've been talking about that. It's a major problem. I'm sure the member for St Catharines would agree with me on this. It's a whole year later and she hasn't even asked them to do it yet.

I have a private member's bill here called An Act to ensure that the producers of electronic equipment retain

responsibility when their products become waste. This bill has been on the books for a while. It's copied after some of the most successful bills in the world, and the minister refuses to deal with it. She's just asking now to have a bill produced?

The other problem is around composting programs. Yes, there are finally some experimental programs in place, but we have to separate—we all know this now—the wet from the dry. My riding just started this program and we're all enthusiastic about it, but we need it all across the province—now.

We have a landfill crisis. Nobody wants incineration, for good reasons, or landfill—

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Except John Tory.

Ms Churley: Except John Tory, that's true, although the Liberals have always been in favour of it, except Jim Bradley. The best approach to take, and we're so far behind, is to get comprehensive programs across the province now to separate the wet from the dry, and to do much more in terms of refillable bottles—liquor bottles, wine bottles, pop bottles, all those kinds of things—to reduce the waste and keep it as dry and clean as possible so you don't have leachate happen with what's left that's put in the garbage dump. Nothing today about any of that.

The Environmental Commissioner today came out with a damning report on this government's record on the environment. He talked about the fact that they are breaking their own laws. We know they've been breaking their own promises, tons of them—how many? I can't even count any more—but now we find out that this Liberal government is breaking its own laws. That's a pretty serious accusation.

I think the most complimentary thing the Environmental Commissioner could say about this government today, and I would not take heart from this, is that it wasn't all bad news. "In fact, there's some room for optimism.... The government is beginning to move forward on some of the issues that we have been reporting on...." "Beginning to move forward on some of the issues"—that's about the closest he could come to saying this government is doing the right thing on the environment.

He goes into great detail about some of the problems in terms of breaking their own laws. He talks about, for instance, being deeply concerned about the fate of all forests throughout the province and that the government is actually making matters worse. That's the Ministry of Natural Resources.

He talks about the fact that mercury is still spewing out of our coal plants. There is some concern, as we well know, that even though the government says they're going to close down the coal plants by 2007—do you know what the ministry has said in terms of mercury? That there is actually no proof the mercury we have that is poisoning our wildlife is coming from coal plants. What nonsense; we know it is. We want a commitment to shut those plants down, not more drivel.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I understand that former member Brad Clark is in the public gallery, and we want to welcome him here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. You have been the Minister of Education now for one full year, and prior to that you were the education critic.

Minister, could you please tell the Legislature what is the measurement date that elementary schools across this province use to set the classroom sizes for the balance of the year, and could you also inform the Legislature of the date on which those numbers are reported to your ministry?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I'm happy that the member opposite is asking technical questions in the House. The boards will do their population reports, as he knows, twice a year: once at the end of October and once again in April. Those serve as dates in which they will serve for the population that they're funded for. As well, there's a class-size report this year that will be available in December of this year, I'm happy to inform the House and the member opposite.

We're working with all of the schools because they have some particularly interesting challenges this year because they're reducing class sizes. They're actually paying close attention to the needs of individual students. And let me tell you, what we're finding is that, yes, of course, because we have many boards—and we recognize, distinct from the government that went before us, that you can't have a one-size-fits-all solution. But, boy, are people enthusiastic in the school boards, in the classrooms and in the principals' offices to make this work.

Mr Klees: Minister, your credibility is sliding with your stakeholders, with parents and with principals right across this province. You have just correctly informed the Legislature that the actual numbers for class sizes aren't available until the end of October. You didn't answer my question about when those are reported to your ministry. They're not reported until the end of November.

Can you tell this House and the people of Ontario how, then, you and the Premier could stage a photo op in the first week of September, claiming reduced class sizes in 1,300 classes across this province, when you had no information about what those actual class sizes could be? Could you inform us how you can make a claim like that?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I think what's probably apparent, even before my answer, is that the only thing falling in

this province is the size of classes for primary kids. In point of fact, had the member opposite—I want to invite him, if he would like to be briefed on the subject—asked us, he would know what we require. Because when we give out dollars, every dollar matters; every dollar has to produce a good result. So the \$90 million that this Premier and this finance minister cited to go toward these young children required plans. As the member should have known, every board had to tell us specifically, in advance, how many classes would benefit, where would they be putting their particular dollars, how would kids benefit, and only when we received those plans did they receive the dollars from the ministry.

So I say to you, again, we're very glad to report that 1,300 schools have seen class-size reductions. We don't know why the members opposite are against it, but it's the right thing. It's what our students need.

Mr Klees: Here's what we're against: misleading the public. That's what we're against. The fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Klees: The fact of the matter is, the minister knows full well that what is actually happening in the classrooms is not what he and the Premier represented.

We have real people with us here today: Lionel and Wendy Teed, along with Patrick, who is in grade 3 in the Millgrove school. That classroom, Mr Minister, increased from 17 in the first week of September to 28 today—28.

There are calls from parents right across this province to your office, which you are not returning, simply trying to get an explanation from you as to why you would represent in public one thing when the reality is something else.

Could you today explain to the Teeds why their child is in a class of 28, and will you also agree to meet with them following question period, because you've ignored their calls thus far? Will you agree to meet with them and give them an explanation today?

1410

Hon Mr Kennedy: Indeed, I think there may be an apology in order. It really is a fact that the last government ignored the needs of students in this province for so long that—we said this in our election campaign and we said it as we came in—it takes time to clean up after such a big Tory mess as we have in our education system.

I would say directly to the parents who are here and to a student who is here from Millgrove school, if any parents don't receive class size reductions this year, they are still receiving the benefits of \$854 million worth of instruction improvements or the improvements for training teachers that have taken place. This year, 8,000 teachers were trained who didn't get it before. They'll be glad to know that that money is there, in Millgrove school, that you and your colleagues put into private schools and that we instead have given to their kids.

Further, they have these benefits and what they will see in the months coming up—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier, the self-styled education Premier in Ontario. You made a promise, more than a year ago now, promise number 13: "We will make sure our schools are safe so students can concentrate on learning." You've failed. You've broken your promise. We do not have mandatory screening of volunteers in our schools.

There is a particular situation in Barrie where a teacher who was found guilty of professional misconduct by the Ontario College of Teachers is volunteering in Johnson Street Public School. May I remind you that this same teacher, according to the *Globe and Mail*, has been placed on the child abuse register. This individual admitted to writing 64 inappropriate letters to a student. In these letters, she referred to the 13-year-old boy student as a "hottie" and a "big stud." She wrote, "There can never be another honey for me." She even went so far as to sign to some letters, "Love, your woman."

When are you going to require mandatory screening of volunteers in the schools of Ontario, as you promised?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Education.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It is interesting what a change in seating will do for someone's perspective. The member opposite asking the question was part of a government that turned down Liberal amendments for the outcome of the Robins report. I want to tell this House that we will be bringing forward measures to require background screening for volunteers and others in the schools. We will have more to say about that shortly.

What I want to say today to the member opposite is that he raises a situation that is in the media, but I think he also understands well that there was a criminal trial held, or at least a trial held, and a finding was made in that trial. The member opposite may know what that finding is. But I would say that we don't make comment on that on this side of the House. It is our job to ensure the safety of all the students in schools and we're going to do a much better job than was done by the government before.

Mr Flaherty: A finding of professional misconduct by the Ontario College of Teachers, which is responsible for regulating teachers, as you should know—you're the Minister of Education and you're supposed to be accountable for the safety of children in our schools. You talk about cameras and all these other things. What about people who have not been screened volunteering in the schools?

I did ask you the question. I asked you the question five months ago today in this Legislature, on June 21—exactly five months ago—and you said, "It is the outlook of this government that everyone who comes in contact with children should be screened...."

So we have the Premier's promise number 13, we have your commitment in this House to the members of this Legislature five months ago, and you have done

nothing. When are you going to bring the legislation to this House to require mandatory screening of volunteers to protect the children in our schools?

Hon Mr Kennedy: If the member and his colleagues who voted down my amendments to that effect would now support them, I'd be happy with his expeditious assistance to bring those measures to the House and to see if we can get the arrangement of the third party. I'd be happy to do it as quickly as possible.

What I would like from the member opposite—I won't ask for consistency—is genuine concern in terms of where we are going to be able to move forward for student safety in this province. We've heard from his colleague sitting on the bench there talking about how he doesn't want us to move forward in terms of securing against intruders, and now we hear that you might be interested in some of these measures. From this side of the House, we'd be very happy to have their co-operation as quickly as possible to do the things we proposed to them in government that they turned down and that fit another part of the list of things that we have to do in this new government. We're here, prepared to do it. Can I have your agreement today that you'll stand in support of them, that you won't, as you did before, stop them so they can't be there as measures that would be helping students of this province?

Mr Flaherty: We will co-operate. Would you please bring the amendment to the Education Act in today? We can do it this afternoon, for we'll co-operate first reading, second reading and third reading. Come on, Minister. Bring it in. You promised on June 21. We're looking forward to seeing it this afternoon. If you need a little time to prepare it, I'll help you over the weekend. We can bring it in on Monday, if you're prepared to do that. I'd be happy to do that.

Lisa Deline is here from Barrie. It's because of parents like Lisa who protest these outrageous situations, who are concerned about the safety of children in our schools, that this kind of issue gets brought forward. She persisted. She spoke to your office, to your press secretary the other day, on October 19. Do you know what she's told by your office, Minister? She's told that her concern is on the pile to be managed, that you don't intend to do anything. You want to manage the people of our province, rather than deal with these important issues. Will you bring forward the legislation either this afternoon or next week? We're ready.

Hon Mr Kennedy: Again, if the member opposite is going to raise issues of children's safety, and if he's going to talk specifically of parents, then he has an obligation, we all know in this House, to be accurate. He knows that screening and police checks on the backgrounds of the situation he's referring to would not apply. I hope he's not holding it out mistakenly or misleadingly. The Ontario College of Teachers, as he realizes, covers teachers. The person in question is no longer teaching. So what I see from the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister, you had some unparliamentary language there. Could you just withdraw.

Hon Mr Kennedy: If there's anything unparliamentary, I withdraw it in terms of the previous language. What I say to the member opposite, however, is that he has an obligation to put forward to the people who are affected or are having concerns, and we will meet that—I will say that we have amendments ready to go. We will depend on the co-operation of the member opposite that we couldn't get when he was in the government. For all those many long years, they dragged out the legislation, they dragged out the response—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, every day brings another bad story about your bully boy health minister. Instead of helping hospitals serve their communities, furious George has been out there intimidating and bullying them again. Now, he's trying to blackmail hospitals into silence. Today, the Toronto Star reports that your bully boy health minister threatened to cancel a hospital project in North Bay if people there lobbied for more provincial funding. Premier, do you approve of this policy of using financial blackmail to silence Ontario's hospitals?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Let me just warn the members here that there are some very unparliamentary words, calling all the members—

Interjection.

The Speaker: There has been some very unparliamentary language. I'm going to caution you, especially since we're all honourable members here. I don't like the way this has been going for the last couple of days. So I want you to refrain from calling other members in these unparliamentary ways. I'm going to warn members from now on on that matter. Minister.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): This is more of the same in terms of the allegations made by members of the opposition. I reject those. I have confidence in my Minister of Health. As I said yesterday, he brings a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and passion to his responsibilities.

What we are about to undertake is something that is significant. It represents a real transformation in our health care. We're talking about ensuring that we get value for patients and taxpayers alike in return for this additional investment, the most money we've ever put into hospitals in the history of this province. In order to do that, we have to change the way some things take place in our hospitals. That's not an easy thing to do. The person who is leading the charge on behalf of this government, but more importantly on behalf of Ontario patients, is Mr Smitherman, and he's doing a fabulous job.

1420

Mr Hampton: It certainly is change when the Minister of Health goes around the province telling hospitals and hospital boards, "If you don't shut up, you might lose your hospital project." That is certainly change. I think the people of Ontario are fortunate that the mayor of East Ferris township has had the courage to come forward and confirm to the Star that your health minister threatened to cancel North Bay's hospital project if the supporters of the hospital didn't shut up.

Premier, is this what you meant by "choose change"? Is this your new hospital policy, your health minister telling hospital boards and hospital volunteers to shut up and, if they don't keep quiet, they could lose the financing for their hospital project?

Hon Mr McGuinty: These allegations and this innuendo have been made by either unnamed sources—we have a particular name here, but I just thought this partisan representation was made on behalf of somebody. I'm sure Mr Hampton would be interested in knowing that this mayor of East Ferris appeared in an ad for the Conservative Party. That might be of passing interest to the NDP. It might be of some passing interest to the Conservative members as well. I think it introduces an element of truth into this debate.

Mr Hampton: Here's the change: Because he may have identified with the Conservative Party on an issue or two, suddenly, according to the Premier, he's a liar. Is that the change?

It's not just North Bay. People in Hamilton are wondering why their hospital project is suddenly on hold. The people of Woodstock are wondering what they did to offend the Minister of Health because suddenly their hospital project is on hold. The citizens of Richmond Hill are afraid that maybe they did something to offend the Minister of Health because suddenly their hospital project is on hold. The reporter from the Kenora Daily Miner and News called me yesterday and wanted to know why Kenora's hospital project is on hold. In fact, 30 hospital construction projects somehow are suddenly on hold.

What is this, Premier? It looks like the Minister of Health goes around the province and says, "You better get in line with the McGuinty policy, or else." Do you have any other explanation, Premier, because we'd like to hear it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member may be interested in learning that there are close to 100 communities in the province today that are anxious to build or expand a hospital. The problem is that, on their watch, they built no hospitals. On the watch of this former government, they promised all kinds of hospitals but left us no money. That's why we find ourselves in this situation. That's why we are so determined to make sure we're getting value for the investments we're making in health care today.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Hampton: To the Premier: You might want to check your facts, but I don't think it would make any difference to you because you've already got a reputation

for saying one thing before an election and then completely changing the story after the election.

Here is the reality: You have succeeded in creating a crisis now for our hospitals. You've got your minister going out there and bullying hospital administrators, threatening hospital boards. When he doesn't have time to do that, he says, "Well, we've got to cut the wages of the lowest-paid workers in the hospital system."

Premier, I looked at your budget again. You're getting \$825 million of new money from the federal government, you've got \$2 billion in contingency reserves and you've got the new health tax. It adds up to close to \$4 billion. Can you tell us, why are you going out there and threatening hospitals, saying, "We're not going to this, we're not going to approve your project," when you're sitting on close to \$4 billion that you say must be spent on health?

Hon Mr McGuinty: That must be the new math. Maybe the minister has introduced something I'm not aware of, but that's not something with which we are familiar on this side of the House.

We're putting more money into hospitals than ever before. In return for that, we are insisting that that new money—in a way that gets results for Ontario families and patients. For example, we are insisting on 36,000 new cardiac procedures every year, we're insisting on 9,000 more cataract procedures, we're insisting on 2,300 more hip and knee replacements, and we're insisting that we hire more full-time nurses.

Outside hospitals, we're insisting on bringing home care to 100,000 more Ontarians. We're talking about hiring thousands more people to work in our nursing homes, including 600 new full-time nurses. We're going to ensure our seniors have at least two baths a week. If the member wants to know where the money is going, that's where the money is going.

Mr Hampton: People have heard your empty promises over and over again. What they're seeing, for example in Sault Ste Marie, is 40 nurses going out the door. They wonder where the nurses are going to be to provide these health services. In North Bay, if anyone dares to talk about funding for their hospital project, they're told, "You talk any more, you could lose it." People have heard enough of the empty promises. People want to see peace and constructive activity in their hospitals. What you're doing is conducting a campaign of attack and fear against our hospitals. When are you going to use the money you've got available to sit down and work constructively with our hospitals? They want to move forward on progressive change, but you can't do it by attacking and intimidating them. When are you going to work with them constructively instead of attacking them?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the Minister of Health is eager to get in on this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting now to know that the policy of the NDP is to get everybody together for a big group singing of Kumbaya. I wonder what was ongoing

when you brought forward the social contract. Was that the mentality you were operating on then?

Let me say very clearly with respect to the issue in North Bay, which the honourable member wishes to raise, that it's true I went to North Bay on Father's Day. I flew there from Stratford with a couple of my staff members. What I took the opportunity to do that day was to make a point, and I did it very, very directly because I felt the people of that community deserved a very honest answer to the situation around the funding of hospital capital. What was clear was that some individuals in that community felt like that community should be involved in attempting to leverage a higher percentage of funding for their hospital. What I clearly told them on that day was that that strategy would not work, that we would not be changing the formula and that continued insistence on that would have the result of compromising the nature of the hospital project. I did that directly. I believe that's what that local community deserved, and I make no apology for that.

Mr Hampton: I think people in the community beg to differ with the interpretation. You call your activity exuberant and energetic; other people out there find it intimidating. It's not just one now; it's more than one. It's not just one hospital; it's not just one hospital administrator. You're developing a reputation around the province.

I say this to the Premier: In your rhetoric you claim that you want to move forward in terms of a progressive health care agenda. But how do you expect to move forward on a progressive health care agenda when what we've seen from the health care minister is intimidating, bullying, and yesterday, threatening to go after the wages of the lowest-paid workers in the health care system? Tell me, how do you expect to do anything constructive when so far what we've heard is a minister who likes the media attention from his bullying, his intimidation and his threatening?

1430

Hon Mr Smitherman: Unlike the honourable member, I am involved in a substantial debate about the future of health care in the province of Ontario. I make no apology whatsoever for going to the community of North Bay and telling them very honestly the situation facing—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Nepean-Carleton, stop interrupting the minister when he is speaking.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Although I appreciate the help from members here, I think I can handle it myself. I want some order in this place.

Hon George Smitherman: Don't worry, Mr Speaker, I am not going to let sideshow Bob distract me from the work I'm doing on behalf of Ontario's patients.

The issue that I think is important to say to the honourable member, with respect to costs in Ontario's hospitals, is that we make a simple, principal point: We want to dedicate every precious penny that's available to patient care. Ontario hospitals have been asked, there-

fore, to engage in a seven-step process that is designed to make sure we carve out all administrative, non-clinical costs. We're at the first stage of that process. That's where Ontario hospitals are focused with us. We have an 18-month time frame in which to get hospitals in balance. Fifty are already there. We are making considerable progress, and we'll continue to work through these on a case-by-case basis.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. I am going read to you from an editorial that appeared today in one of the regional papers: "The residents of the region can only hope the minister has learned to be careful about pressuring the boards."

Can you imagine in your wildest dreams which of your ministers this article is talking about? You might think it's the Minister of Health. Well, it's not; it's the Minister of Education. This is an article that appeared in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, and it's talking about his handling of the clawback of some \$5 million for special education in their board for children with special needs. It's your Minister of Education who is playing games with them, has effectively, and did effectively, threaten them to either spend the money or send it back. They spent the money, and he has now sent in inspectors to find out how they spent it, and they still don't know what is happening.

Premier, will you deal with your Minister of Education and tell him to clarify this matter for the Kitchener-Waterloo district board so they can get on with their special education budget?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Premier?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Education.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I'm very happy once again to clarify for the member opposite. This is a hard concept, I know, but we are working in co-operation. We are actually working with the board.

The board in Kitchener-Waterloo made a certain interpretation of special education policy and spent \$5 million at the end of the year on certain things. They agreed, by board resolution, to sit down and talk to us. We have had several meetings with them. Those meetings have been of a very, very co-operative tone. Our staffs have met, and we have a further discussion to have. There may be a few members of the board who feel differently, but by and large the board is doing what everyone in education needs to do: make the extra effort, try to find a different way, change the channel from the conflict that went on with the member's party and find a way to put the kids first.

In this case, it's about how to manage a very large increase in funding. One hundred million dollars more than boards requested last year is out there helping kids. We're going to find the best way to agree on how those kids are going to benefit, and Kitchener-Waterloo has agreed to work with us on that.

Mr Klees: The minister can give us that rhetoric here, and it may look good in Hansard, but in the real world out there, not only in Kitchener-Waterloo—Minister, I have letters here from Halton Catholic District School Board, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and from virtually every board in this province. They are saying exactly the same thing. By the way, the Premier himself said you have mishandled this file.

Will you today make a commitment to this Legislature and to district school boards right across this province to ensure that they receive the necessary funding, that you will stop trying to claw back money that has already been transferred to these school boards for special needs in this province? Don't be glib about it; get with the program. Be the minister and demonstrate your commitment to children in this province who have special needs to ensure that these boards have the necessary funding.

Hon Mr Kennedy: The member opposite sat in a government for five years that required boards to document the needs of the most vulnerable kids in this province, required medical examinations and required the best teachers in the province to leave their classrooms and sit in the backrooms and fill in paperwork. For five years, year after year after year, they said no. They gave no extra money. That gallery was full of kids who couldn't get their education.

I want to tell you that even at the end of their mandate, when they decided they were finally going to be forced to provide funding—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I have two members here who have used unparliamentary language, and I'm going to ask both members to withdraw. I'm going to ask the member for Oak Ridges and the member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjection.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I withdraw.

Hon Mr Kennedy: This is a very hard and trying time for the opposition party. They don't understand that we're actually governing in this province. We're actually doing the harder job of working out relationships with people. In their particular approach, if they didn't like what a school board was doing, they took it over. If they didn't like what a hospital board was doing, they took it over. They didn't know how to arrive at solutions, how to make sure that the patients and students in this province were put first. And it does take time. After the experience of that government, it takes time to change the channel. I'm pleased to report to the people of Ontario that the channel is being changed.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. The Environmental Commissioner came out with his report today, and he said that you are breaking your own laws and policies. For example, your government is letting toxic substances flow through our sewage treatment plants and into our lakes

and rivers. His report claims that in 2002, 258 kilograms of arsenic flowed into Lake Ontario via Toronto's sewage treatment plants, and 2,545 kilograms of lead flowed through Hamilton's sewers into Lake Ontario. He said that until the mid-1990s the government took an active role in promoting tough municipal sewer bylaws but the Liberals, like the Tories, do nothing while tonnes of lead, mercury and arsenic seep into our lakes and rivers.

Premier, will you finally act to ensure that municipal sewer use bylaws are in effect, reflect current environmental standards and are enforced across Ontario? In other words, will you do your job?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to respond and remind the honourable member that in fact this government is doing its job. My colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has forged a memorandum of understanding. This is a framework document that we will use to address issues, just as this one has been identified by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Obviously, we need to work with our municipal partners to have them understand why it is very important that we do have bylaws that prevent poisons and toxins from getting into our wastewater systems. We now, thanks to the leadership of this Premier and this government, have a vehicle than can make that happen.

Ms Churley: I believe the minister is saying that the commissioner got it wrong today. We'll check to see who is right.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier why he was not opposing the annex agreement that would allow the eight Great Lakes states to divert unlimited water from the Great Lakes water basin that we all share. Today I got an answer. The Environmental Commissioner answered that question; it's because the McGuinty Liberals are doing the same thing. He was referring to an issue I raised here before, and that is the big pipe.

Minister, you broke your moratorium on water taking when you issued a water-taking permit for the pipe a few weeks ago. It diverts an unprecedented 66 billion litres of groundwater from the complex that feeds into the Great Lakes basin for the purposes of servicing sprawl.

So I'm going to ask you, Minister, after the commissioner said that allowing the big pipe to go ahead limits your ability to criticize the US, will you listen to the words of the Environmental Commissioner and rescind this water-taking permit today?

1440

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The honourable member is all over the map in terms of what her question is. First it's with the Great Lakes annex, then it's with water-taking permits and then it's with the big pipe.

I have made it very clear publicly with regard to the big pipe that this government takes health and safety

issues within the community very seriously. I know the member opposite has said that a warning from the medical officer of health is a red herring. Well, we don't consider warnings from the medical officer of health a red herring. One other government turned its back on a medical officer of health and there were very serious consequences. We are acting responsibly.

I can tell you about the commitment of this government to the environment. We have increased the operating budget of the Ministry of the Environment by 12%. We have hired more water inspectors to ensure that our water is safe. We are closing coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. We are cracking down on hazardous waste. We are improving air quality standards. We are going to make polluters pay when they pollute our water. So I would suggest that the honourable member maybe pay some attention to the work this government has been doing.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Ontario recently marked the 25th anniversary of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Despite a quarter-century of efforts to make workplaces safer, we read in the papers and see on television almost every night how people are injured or even killed on the job. Minister, this affects the quality of life of those who are injured and their families immensely, and we really have to do something about it. Minister, what are you going to do to improve the health and safety of Ontario workers?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. I'd like to also thank the member for his tireless efforts in making sure that this government is pursuing healthier and safer workplaces.

There is an enormous problem in spite of the fact that business, labour and government, to some extent, have made enormous progress over the years. There's an enormous problem because there are still 300,000 workplace accidents every year. So what did we do?

First, we brought together experts in business and labour with the minister's health and safety action groups in construction, health and manufacturing to get their advice on how to make the system better. The first thing they recommended was that we improve enforcement. So we're hiring 200 health and safety inspectors, the first 100 by November and the second 100 by February. Our goal is to reduce workplace accidents by 20% by the year 2008—a laudable goal.

Mr Duguid: In supplementary, over the years, I've had the privilege to meet and become friends with a constituent of mine whose life and health were permanently altered by a workplace accident. Since that time, he has tirelessly championed the cause of injured workers, dedicating his life to seeking improvements from the government. I'm sure my friend would like to know if there are other things the ministry is doing about work-

place injuries, particularly in the area of occupational disease.

Hon Mr Bentley: I have travelled the province and I've spoken to many injured workers, people whose lives have been altered forever by workplace accidents. They make the compelling case that we always need to do more. So let me tell the honourable member what else we've been doing over the past several months.

First of all, we brought in a system to regularly update the occupational exposure limits, which are the limits set so that workers are not unduly exposed to hazardous chemicals. They weren't being updated regularly. We brought in a system so that now, every year, workers will benefit from the best scientific and medical evidence. But that's not all.

Working with the member from Sarnia-Lambton, earlier in the year we made an important announcement in Sarnia, which made sure that the occupational health clinic in Sarnia was given permanent status and stable funding. That will protect and assist workers who have been afflicted with occupational disease. But that's not all.

We've made regulatory changes with multi-point suspended scaffolding, wood pole climbing—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question today is for the Minister of Education. All across the province children's lives are being disrupted because of your government not providing the proper supports for local school boards. Your government has made massive cuts in some of the rural and Catholic school boards. These cuts affect people's lives. They affect people like Denise Barrett, from the Durham District School Board. Does it make any sense for an older sibling to get a ride in a bus while their younger sibling cannot be transported even though there are surplus seats, thus leaving a four-year-old behind on the sidewalk?

These cuts create problems in places like Chatham Kent school board, where they've had to adopt a multi-tiered school and bus schedule. Because of this, the high school students are picked up from school and start their day earlier than the younger siblings. These cuts have created problems in my own riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. I spoke in the spring session about the problems faced by the Carden and Dalton area. I'd like an answer. They've sent their children to Simcoe area schools for generations.

Arbitrary boundaries are being set by bureaucrats, barriers that prevent parents from sending their children to their community schools. Why are you forcing these choices on school boards? Why are you making it harder for working families to get their children safely off to school and back again? Why are you forcing school boards to go to ridiculous lengths to satisfy your set of rules?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): The House and the public and indeed the parents in the boards just named—there's one thing those boards have in common with all the boards across this province: Their transportation funding went up this year. We improved transportation funding by 5% this year, starting—I know this is a new member who doesn't bear the full responsibility—to make up for some of the damage done by her party when it was in government. So a 5% increase, \$32 million, is a good start. We've also put forward some plans on how transportation can be improved. Every board received at least a 2% increase. Some received as much as a 12% increase to start helping them to do better.

We agreed there should be a first duty on the part of boards to make sure kids are transported safely. There have been incidents this week that don't point to any blame but that remind us we have that duty in this House. We believe our funding is there to do that. We are in dialogue with all the boards. I know it's sometimes a difficult concept, but we're actually not making any changes in transportation without first talking to school boards. We are actually working with them very closely on how transportation in this province can be done even better than it is today. All the boards got more money this year than they did last year.

Ms Scott: It is a concern for safety for children. I'm glad he's consulting with the school boards, because the complaints are many. Later today we'll be debating Bill 73, dealing with children's safety. Minister, safety does not begin when a child gets on a school bus. There is a bus stop located in the riding of my colleague Norm Miller that is unsafe. It's at the corner of Bailey Street and Harris Street in Port Carling. A local parent has even gone so far as to have an audit done showing this is not a safe place to put a bus stop. Why are you forcing school boards to make choices that put children's safety at risk?

Minister, Garfield Dunlop and I wrote to you on behalf of Carden-Dalton in March. It took five months to get an answer. We have written you last week to sit down with the two school boards involved and resolve this issue for the children's safety. Will you meet with the Trillium Lakelands school board and the Simcoe school board?

Hon Mr Kennedy: There is an effort underway right now working with boards on transportation. They are being very helpful. In fact, they helped design a new transportation funding formula that is having a lot of attention around the province, as it should. Most other governments put out their funding formulas and then talk to the people that are affected. We're doing that a year ahead of time, and we will do that with safety as a paramount concern, I want to assure the member opposite.

I would take this moment to invite them to support the bus safety bill we have coming forward this afternoon. I would expect to have the support of all the members of the House. I remember sitting exactly in her position and hearing time after time how Mr Hoy, a member of this

House, brought forward bus safety legislation, over and over again, and could not get the agreement of her party when in government.

We take those responsibilities very seriously. I look for agreement with all members to make sure our students are transported safely every day to school.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, you broke your promise to the people of Ontario to cut auto insurance rates, but more important, you broke my car. This spring, I got my auto insurance bill and it didn't go down 20% like you promised it would. It went up a thousand bucks. So I had to park my Pontiac Sunbird outside, and I told you, "That car's staying there until the rates come down." The problem is, Premier, the rates didn't come down. The only thing that came down was a branch that fell on the roof of my car. So I say to you, Premier, my car's wrecked. They towed it away. It's gone to Car Heaven.

I say to you, Premier, why'd you break your promise to the people of Ontario, but more important, why'd you break my car?

1450

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I recall making a number of promises, but none of those included not breaking the member's car.

Speaker, I'm sure that there is some serious—perhaps there is not. I'll look to the supplementary.

Mr Bisson: I had to do a little investigation. I talked to some people around this Legislature, and it is rumoured—now, I can't prove this; I'm not saying it's me, but it's rumoured—"We saw some guy," somebody reported to me, "last week, on the weekend, slinking around in behind the trees in the east parking lot," and that person, remarkably, looked like you. They said he was a tall guy, kind of dumb-looking. Oh, no; that's not nice. I take that back. It's all in fun. But what's more important, Speaker, is that this guy was walking around with one of them saws, you know, like the type you cut trees with, and they saw the guy climb up the tree, and he partially cut the branch, waiting for it to fall down on my car.

I say again to the Premier, why'd you break my car?

The Speaker: Premier, you've got a second chance.

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is surely a performance worthy of the press gallery party, and perhaps it is at least an audition. But on behalf of our government and on behalf of Ontarians, 12 million-strong, let me offer my deepest condolences to the member opposite on the demise of his beloved vehicle and my every assurance that we will do as much as we can to assist him in his search for a replacement.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Today the Environmental Commissioner's report was released, and unlike in previous years, this year progress was actually made.

However, in his report, the Environmental Commissioner highlights his concerns with Ontario's air standards. He says specifically, "Many of Ontario's air standards were established over 20 years ago ... these standards are clearly dated and may not be adequately protective." He also believes that your ministry's science tools for regulating air emissions from industry are woefully outdated. Minister, what are we doing to address his concerns?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to receive the question from my colleague, and I encourage all members of the House to read the document very carefully. This government takes the report of the Environmental Commissioner very seriously. We see it as an opportunity and as a guide as we move forward with our plan for the environment.

I think it's important to point out as well that the Environmental Commissioner would have completed his study of the work of the government about May or June of this year, so some of the good announcements that our government has made and the good initiatives that we now have underway were predated by the conclusion of his report.

I am very happy to say to the honourable member that on June 22, our government announced the five-point action plan for cleaner air in Ontario. It will toughen the limits on nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide. It will extend the limits to six more industrial sectors, it will monitor 29 additional carcinogens and it will adopt the US EPA monitoring dispersion model, which is what the Environmental Commissioner has really directed us to do here.

Ms Matthews: Although we have come so far in just a year, it's clear there is still work to be done to repair the damage to the environment caused by the previous government. The report included some recommendations on where the government can go from here. Minister, what does your ministry intend to do with those recommendations?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Again, as I explained earlier in the first part of the answer, because of the timing of the end of his report, our government has already initiated actions on a number of the recommendations—the 14 that he brought to our attention. I'm happy to say that we have already implemented the Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality. This will be the body to which some of the concerns he's addressed in this report will be directed.

We've also established the experts panel on the Environmental Assessment Act. The commissioner identified where the Environmental Assessment Act was not actually providing for the need for transparency, accessi-

bility and accountability on the part of the Ministry of the Environment. I expect the experts panel to report by the end of this year, and I expect that the valid issues that have been raised by the Environmental Commissioner will be addressed by that panel in that report.

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today in the House, we're joined by quite a few members of the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth. The minister would be aware that they represent about 97 agencies with 4,000 highly trained child and youth workers, who are providing 24/7 care to some of the most frail and vulnerable children. These are children who have been abused and children who are self-abusing, children with developmental disabilities and children who are medically fragile. They are the only lifeline to their quality of living in this province when parents can no longer cope and provide their care.

Minister, your recent provincial budget held out the promise that these agencies would receive some of the 3% operational increase. In fact, even in the lock-up and in the press releases there was an implication that these agencies would be eligible. Being the minister responsible for the Human Rights Code in this province, why have you specifically put out a funding program that discriminates against some children based on your non-ability to transfer these funds to these residential centres?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me the opportunity to clarify exactly what did happen. The 3% increase did go to the transfer agencies, the agencies that receive funds directly from the Ontario government. It was the first time for such an increase in over a decade—much-needed monies.

We are aware of the pressures in the other organizations as well. It's a new ministry. In fact, the budget of the new ministry is six months old. We are reviewing all of our programs on how to better address the pressures in the system, but this first increase in 10 years did go to those agencies that have a direct funding arrangement with the government.

Mr Jackson: Minister, your facts are incorrect on two fronts. First of all, this is not the first increase in years. In fact, this is the first time in Ontario's history that any government has differentiated and discriminated against this group of workers. In the past, pay equity dollars flowed equally to the entire sector. Staff retention dollars flowed. Retrofit and fire safety dollars all flowed. Even the social contract made sure there was no discrimination in this funding model. You are the first minister and the first government to discriminate against these treatment centres and their workers. More importantly, you are discriminating against the families and the children they serve.

Minister, you held out the point during the budget that they would be covered and now you're suggesting they won't.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Jackson: I have several children in my community whom your ministry refers to these agencies. You, Minister, pay them direct. We used to call them the "minister's children."

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Jackson: Minister, you do fund them directly. Fund these properly and—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Let me clarify something. It's true you didn't discriminate, because you gave no increases to anybody. That's how you didn't discriminate. This is the first increase in over a decade for these. I'm very well aware of the pressures. I met with the association earlier in the mandate, and we are looking at the programs and how we will better address those changes.

1500

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Madam Minister, last week I asked the Minister of Finance a detailed question about the elimination of the Ontario sales tax rebate program for people with disabilities and its financial impact on a young family by the name of Chenier. Your government's own Web site contained improper and outdated information that led people to apply for sales tax rebates that you now say no longer exist. I asked the minister to refund the rebate, given your admission that the Web site was wrong. Your own Liberal member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has written an almost identical letter asking for the same thing. The minister responded to my request by calling my office to let me know that the Web site has now been updated. Well, that's not good enough for the Cheniers, nor is it good enough for me, nor should it be good enough for you.

In light of these revelations, will you do the right thing for this family? Will you apply the refund for those people who got erroneous, wrong, completely bad information from your Web site? Further to this, will you extend the deadline so that people who have relied on this information won't lose out on the rebate?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I know that you are aware, as an MPP who is intimately involved in these issues with your own constituents—we have spoken repeatedly with his office on many issues regarding social services, and we're happy to do that. In this case, you know that we did roll over the tax credit that was applied through the Ministry of Finance and moved it over to Community and Social Services, working with children's services. For the first time, we're able to provide assistance to families for

mobility, not just for adults but for children. In that regard, it really was a tremendous event and probably fairly historic that we have ministries that are prepared to work together and really help people who truly need the help.

I appreciate that as programs change we have to do a good job to inform people, and I hope we can do better that way.

Mr Prue: I'd like to quote from the letter that was sent to the Honourable Greg Sorbara from Jean-Marc Lalonde, MPP for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It reads, in part—this is dated September 27:

"After thorough research on the Ministry of Finance's Web site, Mr Chenier purchased a new van to transport his child. He then found out that the tax refund program had been cancelled two weeks prior to his acquisition. Mr Chenier states that there is no clear mention of this in the Ministry of Finance's Web page and that the Web site should be properly updated.

"...Therefore, on behalf of Mr Chenier, I would appreciate any help that you may be able to offer and I thank you for your co-operation...."

I'm asking the same thing that your own member on that side of the House is asking: Will you extend the deadline, and will you refund the sales tax to the disabled and their families who have been victims of your government's misinformation?

Hon Ms Pupatello: As you know, this MPP is well aware that we look at individual cases all the time. My ministry office works closely with his on innumerable issues, and this is but one.

I can tell you that when we change the program and move it from a tax credit into this kind of program so that children and adults can benefit, four times the number of people will benefit. It is an income-tested program. It is meant to help people who are most in need.

Where we can be helpful for individual cases, we are prepared to do that. This may well be one. I am happy to look specifically at this issue. If there is a way we can help, we are prepared to do that—as we have done on many occasions, as this MPP knows. We're happy to work with members of the House when it comes to helping those who are most vulnerable. We have completely changed our attitude in this government. We believe that our government should be here to help the people who are most vulnerable, and we are always happy to look at each individual case.

CLASS SIZE

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education, although I must preface my question with a comment. I find interesting, if not amusing, the previous questions from a government which took \$2 billion out of education and commissioned a report that told them they shouldn't have done it and to put it back in, to find that they have a sudden overwhelming interest in class size. As I said, it's interesting, if not amusing.

My question—because this is an important issue in my constituency of Etobicoke Centre and around the province—there are classes that exceed the 20 limit and there are parents concerned about those primary classes. Let's set the rhetoric aside and talk about what it is we are doing to help these classes and help parents understand what's going on in the classes.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Indeed we are, as mentioned earlier in this session, reducing class sizes for students across the province. Our goal is very straightforward. It's not a board average, it's not a device to avoid responsibility in the way that some people characterized the previous government, but in fact an actual cap on class sizes. You'll be able to walk into schools, do a head count and tell whether this is in effect.

We have, this year, been able to reach 38% of schools, but this is a big problem and had some years in development. To the parents in the other 62% of the schools, we recognize that that's the other part of the equation. They too have already seen benefits in terms of teacher training, better cleaning and better resources available, and we will work very hard to make sure they get the benefit of class size just as quickly as possible.

We've always said this would be a multi-year initiative. It is getting installed even quicker than we thought, but we are going to take another couple of years to make sure every student in the primary grades benefits.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent to pass second and third reading of Bill 29, An Act to ensure that the producers of electronic equipment retain responsibility when their products become waste. Can I have unanimous consent for that today?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? I didn't hear unanimous consent.

PETITIONS

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm presenting a petition. I was asked to do so by my colleague from Whitby-Ajax. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children's aid society's recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

"Whereas the introduction of a volunteer into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council."

I'm pleased to add my name to this.

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of 1,385 people, a few of whom are here today to hear this petition being read out. It reads:

"Petition to Premier McGuinty to honour commitments made to all social service agencies in the 2004 provincial budget.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services in residential care and treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct-disordered, young offenders, and emotionally disturbed; and

"Whereas over 4,000 child and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive, therapeutic environment; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase in several years; and

"Whereas the government has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as 'per diem funded agencies'; and

"Whereas, by excluding these children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of service and costing the government far more by placing those hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities,

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario and include per diem agencies (Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth) in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to the 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed."

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

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Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition here signed by some of my constituents and others.

"Petition to Premier McGuinty to honour commitments made to all social service agencies in the 2004 provincial budget.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services and residential care in treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct-disordered, young offenders and emotionally disturbed; and

"Whereas over 4,000 children and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive, therapeutic environment; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase in several years; and

"Whereas the government has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as 'per diem funded agencies'; and

"Whereas by excluding those children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of services and costing the government far more by placing those hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario and include per diem agencies (Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth) in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to the 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed."

HEALTH CARE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition signed by hundred of my residents which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I affix my name in full support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas,

"The elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by Colette and Roland Demers of Sudbury, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I table this petition with page Arif.

MEAT PROCESSING ON FARMS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by a great number of residents in the riding of Leeds-Grenville, ably represented by my good friend Mr Runciman. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas changes in the Health Protection and Promotion Act, effective September 1, 2004, now prohibit farmers killing cattle on their own farms for their own use from taking these animals to licensed butchers for custom cutting, wrapping and freezing; and

"Whereas these changes will prove restrictive and costly for farmers raising livestock for their own use; and

"Whereas the new regulation appears to create a double standard between wild game and cattle;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario rescind the new regulations and work with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to find options that will not unfairly penalize farmers who produce meat for their own use."

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition regarding optometry services, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore" we, the undersigned, "support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and" we "urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

I agree with the petitioners, and I've signed this as well.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of parents in the Lisgar area of Mississauga. It reads:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

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"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I absolutely agree with this petition and I'm asking Norah to carry it.

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services in residential care and treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct disordered, young offenders and emotionally disturbed; and

"Whereas over 4,000 child and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive therapeutic environment; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services, or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase; and

"Whereas the government has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as per diem funded agencies; and

"Whereas by excluding those children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of services and costing the government far more by placing these hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities,

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario and include per diem agencies," in particular the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth, "in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to the 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed."

This petition has my full support and signature.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week:

On Monday, October 25, in the afternoon it will be Bill 96; in the evening, Bills 18, 25, 63, 86 and 82;

Tuesday, October 26, in the afternoon, Bill 82; in the evening, Bills 18, 25, 63, 86 and 96;

Wednesday, October 27, in the afternoon, Bill 84; in the evening, Bills 18, 25, 63, 86, 82 and 96;

On Thursday, October 28, in the afternoon, Bill 60; in the evening, Bills 18, 25, 63, 86, 82 and 96.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 1, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Continuing debate, Mr Bisson.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Somebody sent me a note. Whoever did, I couldn't read it. Please send it back to me because I couldn't make it out. I don't know who sent that.

But that has nothing to do with the debate, I want to assure you. This is the debate about Bill 73. It's not about my car.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): You have to get a car before you get a car seat.

Mr Bisson: No, no. We dealt with that matter adequately in question period. We're dealing with Bill 73; it's not about my car.

I want to say at the outset that I had an opportunity, I guess last spring, to make a few comments on this bill when I took the floor as we were ending the day. I want to remind people that this particular bill deals with the safety of children. It's called An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads, and it deals with a number of things. For example, one is mandatory car seats for children under a certain age and size.

Generally, there's some stuff in here that, quite frankly, we can support. I know this kind of stuff has been the subject of much debate in various private members' bills over the years, and we've had an opportunity to debate some of that. But I think this goes beyond that, and for that reason there needs to be a little bit more debate in regard to a couple of things.

I just want to go through a couple of points. The first one is on the explanatory note: "New section 57.1.1 authorizes police officers and other enforcement officers to demand identification from passengers in a vehicle driven by a novice driver in order to determine whether the novice driver is contravening a condition or restriction imposed on novice drivers by regulation." I'm wondering why we have to have that in legislation. I would like somebody to clarify that point. It's always been my understanding that police officers have the right to ask a driver for his or her licence. At that point they can determine if there are any restrictions on the graduated licence: if the person is not supposed to be driving after dark, if they have to have 0% intake of alcohol. All those things are described on the licence, and I always thought that police officers had that right.

Whenever I see these kinds of things showing up in legislation, I wonder why we're doing it. One of my complaints, and I think some of the members who have been around here for a while may bear this out, is that sometimes some of the legislation we draft is written in a way that is pretty darned difficult for a regular person out there to understand. When you get language like we've got in section 57, I think it makes it a little bit more difficult to understand. On that particular section, I think the police already have the authority to do that, and I would like to know why we have to have this in this legislation.

The other thing on restrictions on the novice driver is, why do we need to have special legislative authority to take a look at the person who is the licensed driver with the novice driver? Again, I assume the police have the authority to do that already, because they've been doing it for years. It would be interesting to see why that's in there.

Then, under section 106—this is one that I agree with, but there's a problem with it. I think we need to talk this through and get it into committee so we can figure out how to do this in a way that doesn't penalize grandparents; that's what I'm really worried about with this

particular clause, and you'll understand why in a minute. It says, "Under current subsection 106(7), a child passenger who weighs less than 23 kilograms must occupy a position where there is a seat belt." OK, everybody agrees. "This is repealed, leaving the requirements respecting child seating and restraint systems to be set out in the regulations." It goes on, and I could read some more, but what it basically says is that you have to have a car seat in your car if you go to pick up any child who's less than 23 kilograms in weight.

I'm not a grandparent yet, and I don't think my daughters, at 22 and 27, are planning any children at this point. But at one point I imagine I'll be a grandparent—I hope I am, like everybody else. Nobody wants to have a situation where children can be put in danger—

Mr Qadri: You have to get a car before you get a car seat.

Mr Bisson: That's a good point: I'd have to have a car before I get a car seat. That's very witty. I never thought of that. I guess a Ford truck doesn't count—that's another story.

Anyway, nobody disagrees that we need to do things to make our children safe in cars, as well as any other occupants who are in the cars. But the effect of that particular section is this: The grandparent who is being called at the last minute to go and pick up a granddaughter, or a grandson at a hockey practice, because mom or dad can't be there because of some occurrence, is going to be required to have a car seat in their car. What happens if the grandparents are not normally the people who pick up the child? Do they run off to Canadian Tire or any other store that may be out there and pick up a car seat and have it—

1530

Interjection: Wal-Mart.

Mr Bisson: No, I'm not referring them to Wal-Mart, I want you to know.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Canadian Tire then.

Mr Bisson: Canadian Tire is a great place to go. My favourite shopping is at Canadian Tire, but that's for another debate.

Mr Kormos: I'm partial to George's hardware.

Mr Bisson: George's hardware in Welland? I've been there with you—really good selection. People should go in and check it out. But that's for another debate, not this one.

Of course, you can't forget Canada Glass, which I brought you to. You'll love the selection. Gilles Bélanger runs a great place up on Wilson, but that's for the third debate.

My point is this: The grandparent gets a call. The child calls the parent and says, "Mom, Jeez, I can't go over to pick up your granddaughter. She's in figure skating. Something just happened. I've got to go and pick up John at the airport. Something else has gone on. Can you go pick her up, please, at her skating practice?" So the grandparent gets in the car, drives over to pick up the child, puts the child in the car, puts the child in a seat

belt, but technically could be charged under this section of the bill for not having a car seat.

It raises a whole bunch of issues. Should grandparents who regularly drive grandchildren take the responsibility to put in a car seat? Some people would argue yes, that would be a good idea. I would argue we should encourage people to do that, but to make a law like that, I'm not quite sure what the purpose is. Are we trying to boost the car seat industry or something? I don't know.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: This is where I'm going. The point I'm making is that I don't think we should make that a requirement for somebody who is an occasional driver who picks up a child and drives them from point A to point B. Yes, we have laws in this province that say people need to be behind seat belts. I understand the argument. There have been enough studies done, some very good studies, where we have determined that seat belts on infants could be pretty darned dangerous, probably more dangerous than we realize. That's the reason this section of the bill is there.

I think we need to go to committee and get some lawyers and others to come before us, and those people who may be grandparents or others affected, to talk a little bit about whether we want to force grandparents or other people to be obligated to have a car seat in their car when going to pick up a child over the weight of 23 kilograms.

It raises another thing. I know this is a really fine line, and I know in legislation we have to pick—can somebody grab that? I just knocked over my legislation. The legislation has fallen on the floor of the House, Mr Speaker. What does that mean?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): For a price.

Mr Bisson: For a price? OK, what do you want? Yes, you can speak. Not a problem. In fact, you can have House duty this afternoon, if you want it.

We need to have a discussion in committee about the prospect of having a mandatory requirement to have booster seats inside your car; I think it is a bit beyond.

If we were to have a law that says that, as a parent or person in custody of a child as a regular caregiver, you have to provide that in your vehicle. I could understand that. But again, I don't know the legality. I'd like to hear some lawyers' view about that provision of the bill.

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to talk about another very important part of busing, and that is the new formula this government has put out when it comes to busing in Ontario.

Currently, the way it works, or up until this fall, is there is a policy of the government of Ontario that all four school boards in your area, the French public and Catholic and the English public and Catholic, receive dollars from the Ministry of Education. Those dollars are earmarked for busing so that your children can be bused to schools. We have, over the years, asked boards, and boards have complied, to work together to pool their

transportation dollars so that we have an in-common busing policy for all school boards in your area.

Each school board gets these dollars. They pool them together and collectively they run their busing service. I think that makes ultimate sense. For example, the city of Timmins was the very first place in the province, many years ago before the Tories enacted this policy, which I agree with, to have in-common busing. Before government ever made it mandatory, the Roman Catholic separate school board and the public board in the city of Timmins had been doing this for some years. So the Tory government came along and one of the good things they did—I have problems with many things they did, but this one I agreed with—was they said we should follow that practice across the province so that we have in-common busing policies for all school boards in one region.

The effect of that was that, let's say, for example, the English Catholic board didn't get quite enough money in the formula to cover their busing cost and the French Catholic board may have got more. In fact, that's what happens in our particular school situation. The French Catholic board is getting a surplus in their money and the English Catholic board is getting less. They're able to cross-subsidize each other so that busing policies are the same for each board. That's fine; it makes sense. It encourages them to work together.

The new busing policy is going to stop that. Some school boards are going to be big losers. For example, the English Catholic board in our community is losing about 40% of their budget when it comes to transportation, while the French Catholic system is actually going to get more. But the effect is that it is going to be very difficult for the French Catholic board, which has a surplus, to dip into their own funds in order to make up the lost subsidy they were getting by way of the 40% that used to be in the budget for the English Catholic board.

The effect is it may not only make a disadvantage when it comes to busing policies in common in our communities, but it will stop school boards from co-operating, because why would the French Catholic board use their operating dollars to subsidize transportation for the English Catholic board? So you could end up at the end of the day with busing policies that are particular to each of the boards. And then one board that happens to have a formula that doesn't give them a good advantage—they lose money—could be in a situation where they don't bus children as much or as well as their competitor board, in this case the English Catholic system, thus losing students and making a spiral when it comes to busing policy.

I just wanted to raise that and say that the government should rethink that particular policy, because I think it was a wrong one.

Back to this bill again, under section 207. I am just going to go through the explanatory note. I was actually reading the legislation. It says, "Under section 207, the owner of a vehicle may be charged with and convicted of an offence even though the owner was not driving the vehicle when the offence was committed."

If you remember, we've had this debate in the House before. I remember the Liberals voting against that specific provision that was found in what they called photo radar back in the 1990-95 Parliament under Bob Rae. If you remember, our government had introduced photo radar. The Liberals and Tories were opposed to it, but one of the big things they were opposed to and made big hay on and, quite frankly, won votes in the election over, is this whole notion that you could lend your car to somebody who goes speeding down the highway and gets a speeding ticket, and the owner of the car gets the ticket because it's the car that's ticketed, not the driver.

Now, in this legislation, this has to do with the booster seats and the belt requirements that are found in this legislation. You take your car that's properly equipped to drive your children who are 23 kilograms and over and you say, "Mom, take my car, go pick up the kids. I can't make it. The keys are in the drawer when you go in the house." Mom comes over to the house, grabs the keys, gets in the car, drives down to the hockey rink, picks up her granddaughter who's in figure skating and, all of a sudden, driving back, the child doesn't put the belt on and the grandparent doesn't make a thing of it or whatever—they're going to ticket the car. They're going to ticket me as the parent. In fact, it wasn't me; I have all the safety provisions inside my car. It's the responsibility of the person I lent the car to, as far as I'm concerned, to make sure the belts are on. What this particular legislation is saying is that we are going to ticket the car.

Again, we need to have a bit of discussion around that, because I think that is a problem. I hope I'm interpreting this wrong, but I don't think I am. I just want people to know that's it.

It is also associated, under section 207, with the issue of going around a school bus when the lights are flashing. Again, this is synonymous to what happened under photo radar. Currently, if a person passes a school bus when the red lights are flashing, they can be charged and given a fine. Section 207 basically says that if I lend my car to my neighbour and my neighbour takes off and passes a school bus with flashing lights, they will ticket the car, which means to say I, as the owner, will be responsible.

I guess the argument could be made that I should have been more careful about who I lent my car to and it's up to me to collect from the person who got the ticket. One is, it will count against my driver's abstract on the car itself, because the insurance will look at my abstract when it comes to determining the price of my insurance. If my car was involved in an incident in which it was charged with having failed to stop behind a school bus with flashing lights and I wasn't even the driver, it's going to be my abstract that's going to be affected. Why should my insurance go up because I lent my car to my buddy or my son or whoever it might be? I don't have a son but if I did, it would be a son. Why in heck—

1540

Mr Qaadri: There's still time.

Mr Bisson: I can tell you, it ain't going to happen.

My daughters wouldn't do that; that's why I said that. My daughters are very responsible drivers. Both Julie and Nathalie would not pass a school bus. They're better drivers than their father. That's why I said if I had a son, he'd be as bad as me. But I wouldn't pass a school bus either.

My point is, the difficulty is you're putting the person who owns the car in a position of being responsible for something he or she didn't do that was caused by another driver. I'm just saying that's wrong. We shouldn't be doing that.

The other example is a bit of a far-fetched one, but it could happen. Somebody steals your car, hot-wires the car, takes off—

Mr Qaadri: Call the police.

Mr Bisson: Call the police, fine, but here's the problem. I call the police. The police say, "OK, we're going to do an investigation. We'll find out where your car has gone, sir, and when we find it, we'll let you know." Two hours later, they call me back and they say, "We just found your car. It's in a ditch. They just ran over a kid, and they did that while passing a school bus with flashing lights." Whose driver's abstract is that going to be tied to? I called the cops. It's mine. I own the car. That's the difficulty with that.

I think we need to refer this thing to committee in order to make sure the owner of the car would not be penalized for something he or she did not do.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): What about the car? Should the car be penalized?

Mr Bisson: My car got penalized, I've got to tell you. That's a whole other story. It was in question period today that we finally resolved the case of the missing roof.

Anyway, I'm just saying we need to look at this bill in committee when it comes to section 207 to make sure we don't put ourselves in the position of penalizing the owner of a car for the actions of somebody who might have stolen the car or taken the car even with permission. We should be going after drivers.

The other part, when we stop to think about it, is what is the deterrent to crime? The deterrent is the fear of getting caught. That's the one thing we do know. If I'm a bad driver and I've borrowed somebody else's car and I know I can pass a school bus and not be charged—in fact, my buddy who I borrowed the car from is going to get charged—what deterrent is there for me as a bad driver not to do that? I think what you need to do is charge the driver.

If you want to have an investigation and say, "Mr Bisson, we have the plates. Your car was involved in an incident. A school bus driver reported that the car illegally passed the bus when the lights were flashing. If you don't turn over who the heck has borrowed your car, we're going to charge you," maybe that's a different thing. But at the end of the day, you should be charging the person who actually did the driving. That's the way you should do it.

I'd be interested in looking at an amendment that deals with the failure of the owner of the car to co-operate with

the police. If I decide I don't want to turn over information that it was my daughter or my neighbour or whoever who drove the car, then that's a whole different matter that we can debate in committee and figure out if that's the best way to do it. I just don't want to go down a road that says at the end of the day that we are not going to have a deterrent for the actual driver.

I think if you look at statistics—and this is really the interesting part—when it comes to accidents, especially in the cases of high-speed chases, you will be really surprised to see to what degree the cars that are involved were not driven by owners. That surprised me when I saw that some years ago. More times than not, they're hot-wired. They're cars that have been stolen, especially in the case of somebody going for a joyride and getting caught and then being involved in a high-speed chase. I forget what the percentages were, but it was a very high percentage of cars involved in high-speed chases as a result of somebody who decided to go for a joyride and hot-wired a car. Again, I come back to this provision of the legislation. The effect of that would be that the person who hot-wired and joy-rode the car could get off with having contravened the Highway Traffic Act and not the person who was actually the driver.

Obviously, I wouldn't know who stole my car, so it would be pretty hard for me to co-operate with the police and give the name, because I don't know who the heck stole it, but in many other cases where you've lent your car, there should be a requirement that you actually co-operate with the police in the investigation by turning over the name.

It goes on to say there are new subsections 175(19) through (24) that "allow for distinctions between charges laid against drivers and charges laid against owners for failing to stop for a school bus to be made in the government's computer systems. New subsections 175(25) to (28) allow for different methods of service to be prescribed for service on the owner of the vehicle for the offence of failing to stop for a school bus."

Again, it's one of those things where, when we get into writing legislation, I wish we could write these things a little more clearly. I've been reading legislation for some time, and when I saw that, I originally thought it meant this subsection deals with what I just talked about, which is not holding the driver responsible for something that wasn't their fault. But as I read it some more, I said to myself, well, I'm not quite sure that's what they're getting at. That's why I think this particular bill needs to go off to committee, in order to deal with that particular section.

Then, section 7 of the bill "is amended to provide that if an owner convicted of the offence of failing to stop for a school bus with its overhead red signal-lights flashing fails to pay the fine imposed on the conviction, the owner's vehicle permit may not be validated or a new permit issued until the fine is paid."

Here's the effect: Somebody stole my car. I parked it at Queen's Park and a tree fell on it—no, no; that's another story. Somebody steals my car, they go out and

pass a school bus, and a ticket is issued. I say to the police, "Hey, listen, it wasn't me. I'm not paying that ticket; no bloody way. Somebody stole my car." They say, "Fine. Don't pay the ticket. We'll see you in court." Meanwhile, I go to renew the plate sticker on my car and the Ministry of Transportation is going to say, "We're not renewing because there's an outstanding ticket that you haven't paid," because currently, as you know, they can hold your permit up for renewal if you don't pay for traffic violations. The effect of that is that I could be held liable for a traffic violation I didn't cause. I don't think that's right. Again, I think it goes back to what I said: We need to be able to deal with that.

Après ça, on regarde que:

« L'article 12 prévoit actuellement que lorsqu'une instance relative à une infraction prévue par n'importe quelle loi est introduite par voie d'avis d'infraction, les mesures ou les résultats prévus dans cette loi en cas de déclaration de culpabilité ne s'appliquent pas, sauf quelques exceptions précises. Parmi ces exceptions figurent deux dispositions du Code de la route. L'article 12 est modifié afin d'établir que l'ensemble du Code de la route constitue une exception à la règle générale. »

That's a heck of a mouthful. I had to read that in French, because I first read it in English and I didn't know what it meant. Then I read it in French and I still don't know what it means. I wish somebody would explain to me exactly what we are getting at. Again, that's the reason we need to go to committee. I really don't know what we're trying to get at with some of this stuff. I looked at that and read it a couple of times, and I said to myself, "I don't know. What are they really getting at?" Because what they are saying is that "Among the exceptions are two provisions of the Highway Traffic Act. Section 12 is amended to set out all of the Highway Traffic Act as an exception to the general rule."

I think what they were getting at is, this particular amendment about ticketing cars and not ticketing drivers stands out in stark contrast to whatever other provisions are in the Highway Traffic Act. They're saying this will stand out as an exception to the rule; that's what they're basically getting at. That's sort of the way I read it.

It seems to me that you should try to make a law that has the same rules for everybody when it comes to the particular law, and with the same principle in the bill itself. What this particular bill is going to do when it comes to the provision of ticketing the owner is that it's going to stand in stark contrast to other sections of the Highway Traffic Act. So you've got a situation where everywhere else in the Highway Traffic Act you have to ticket the individual, but the only place in the Highway Traffic Act where you don't ticket the individual is in the stuff that deals with car seats and with passing buses when the red lights are flashing. I think it takes the Highway Traffic Act, stands it up on its head and makes it so that you have a schism in the legislation that says, "In all cases but these two, this is the general rule"—except for these two particular rules. Then, "Section 69 is amended in order to give effect to the permit denial

authorized by amendments made in this bill to section 7 of the Highway Traffic Act.” That’s much the same as what I just talked about. Those are some of the points that I wanted to raise in this particular debate when it comes to the bill.

1550

I think that the bill should go to committee. I generally support what we’re trying to do here; I guess I should put that on the record. It would be unfair to say we don’t support this bill and this is a terrible bill and we’re going to jump up and down and oppose it. No. I think that what we’re trying to do is a good thing. The principle is that we want to make sure we do a couple of things. One is that we take the infraction of people trying to pass a school bus with flashing red lights as a very serious offence and say that should not be permitted and we have to have some kind of a law that’s severe enough to deter somebody from doing it. As I said earlier, it’s always the fear of getting caught that stops people from breaking the law. If people know they’re not going to get caught, there’s an impunity to breaking the law. If people fear they may get caught, they’re less likely to perform the act of breaking the law.

My problem with the bill is that we’re saying, in some cases, there’s impunity. In some cases you have drivers who, because they’re not the owner of the vehicle, will basically be scot-free from being charged. I think we need to make clear that we charge the driver. Like I was saying, my suggestion is—and I don’t even know if it’s a good one, which is why I want to get to committee; I’m not clear in my own mind—that maybe what we need to do is say that the only time we charge the car is when we have not been able to identify the driver because the person sped by. Therefore, let’s have a law that says it is incumbent upon the owner of the car to be co-operative with the police in their investigation to determine who was actually the driver who broke the law, and that if the person doesn’t co-operate, there are rules in law to deal with that and the person can be charged accordingly.

It would be wrong, for example, for a driver of a car who lends the car to his brother-in-law to say, “I’m not going to tell who it is, because I don’t want my brother-in-law getting a ticket.” There has to be some mechanism to force the owner of the car who lent it to come clean on who he or she lent the car to.

Conversely, I don’t support the idea of ticketing the car. I had the same problems with photo radar. I just want to put that on record. I supported generally the principle of photo radar, but I never supported the principle of ticketing the car. I thought that, even for our government, wasn’t the right way to go, because you could end up as somebody whose car has been stolen and be responsible for what was a breach of the Highway Traffic Act by somebody who stole the car and you have no knowledge of and never gave permission to drive your car.

I also want to say that on the issue of booster seats, again, on that particular section of the bill, I’ve got no difficulty. We know that over the years, not that many years ago, it was not law and mandatory that people had

to wear seat belts. I remember at the time the big debate in Ontario when seat belt laws were introduced in this province. I think it was done by the Bill Davis government, if I remember correctly. I stand to be corrected if I’m wrong. People just railed against that. It was the big debate in the late 1970s. “My God, they’re going to make me wear a seat belt.” People were just mortified by the idea.

It was the right thing to do. The government knew by way of study that where we force people to wear seat belts, the fear of getting a ticket for not wearing a seat belt was a big enough deterrent and people started to buckle up. And in co-operation with a whole bunch of advertising, people did start buckling up. As a result, we find now that people survive collisions far more frequently than we did in the past.

In fact, I was involved in a collision some years ago with my sister-in-law. I think it was in the 1980s. I was driving a pretty big station wagon at the time. There was black ice on the road, and a woman coming around the corner on a curve in the highway lost control of her vehicle. We were both doing about 60 miles per hour. The amazing thing about that accident is her car—she was driving a small compact of some type—was totally demolished, and how that woman lived, I have no idea. The car was basically sliced in half; the engine was in the ditch and the battery was somewhere else. The only seat left was where the woman was sitting, and what saved her was wearing her belt. If the woman who was driving the oncoming car that hit me had not been wearing her belt, for sure, she would not be here today. Both my sister-in-law and I walked out of that without a scratch, and the reason was we were wearing belts.

I say that because it was just about the time that it was being drilled in our heads that we had to wear seat belts. The law had been around for a while. I was one of those resistant people saying, “I’m not going to put on seat belts. That’s not cool. That’s not macho. Ain’t going to happen to me. I’m a great driver. I’ll never get into an accident.” For whatever reason, that day, after watching those commercials over and over again, my sister-in-law Gail gets into the car and all of a sudden I said to her, “Listen, Gail, buckle up.” She said, “No, I don’t buckle up. You don’t buckle up. What are you talking about?” We got into this argument. Finally, I sort of insisted and we both ended up putting our belts on.

Imagine that. Two people who never buckle up got into an argument about buckling up. We weren’t five minutes down the highway and we got into that collision. My point is that we know these kinds of laws can save lives. I’m a beneficiary of that particular law. I don’t know if I would have been killed, but I could have been harmed, if not killed, and how the woman in the oncoming compact car walked away from that is still an amazing thing in my own mind.

Generally, I support the idea of making booster seats mandatory for kids over 23 kilograms. I understand the logic for doing it. I support it. I think we need to figure out how we can make this law such that it is an encour-

agement for people to comply with the law so that our children can be made safer. We do know the reality is that infants involved in motor vehicle accidents with seat belts are more likely to be injured by wearing a belt because it's improperly put above them. They're too small and the belt basically could be more of a danger to them because of their size, and the physical design of the belt is not made for that infant. So the booster seat makes some sense for children over 23 kilograms.

It's the same thing as the argument we got into about car seats. Mom used to get in the car and hold the child in her arm. She would have her seat belt on and she'd be going down the road. That's how we used to protect kids at one time, until we found out a lot of children lost their lives. Mom was fine because she had a belt on, but the child was a projectile once they hit the oncoming vehicle or whatever it was they hit. The poor child would be hurt or die.

We made car seats mandatory. Again, some people complained but that was the right thing to do. So I don't object to the car booster. That's not a bad idea. I just want to make sure that in doing this we deal with the issue of who gets charged in the event there is an infraction. As I said, I made that particular recommendation about maybe trying to find some way to get the owner of the car to co-operate with the police investigation in the event a ticket has to be issued as a result of the car driving away and just getting the licence number.

This brings me to the other point, which is high-speed chases. I would be remiss in not commenting on that, because we know it's a situation that we get far too often in our cities and towns across this province and across this great nation where there is a high-speed chase, and as a result, someone is killed. Often it isn't the driver of the car or police officer; far too often it's a pedestrian or some other person in an oncoming car or somebody else on the road at the time. One of the things we have to do to reduce that is give police officers the tools they need to apprehend the person who broke, in this case, the Highway Traffic Act, in a way that doesn't force them to get into a high-speed chase.

I understand the logic for saying we want to be able to give the bus driver the ability to take the plate number, or the police officer who happens to see it the opportunity to get the plate number so it doesn't force the police officer to engage in a high-speed chase. Currently, what could happen is the police officer can see a really bad driver pass a school bus with flashing lights and almost hit a child. The police officer gets mad, as any other human being would, takes off after the driver, and all of a sudden it ends up as a high-speed chase. Before you know it, the thing has ratcheted up till you've got two speeding cars chasing around in some town, city or country road somewhere in Ontario and somebody could be killed.

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For the safety of everybody involved, it would make sense to give the police officers the ability, through this law, to allow them to simply take the plate number. They

say, "I put my flashing lights on. I took off after him. The car started to speed, I sped up and it was apparent to me this was going to be a high-speed chase. I was not comfortable with the high-speed chase as a police officer because it could have gotten out of hand and allowed an accident to happen; therefore, I've just got the plate number and we'll chase down the car a little bit later."

In the event, in the case that they go back to the owner of the car and it wasn't the owner who was driving, there needs to be some mechanism to be able to say, "All right. Either you co-operate with the police investigation or else." I think that's a way of dealing with it. And if the person is dumb enough, as the owner of the car, to say, "I'm not turning over my irresponsible brother-in-law who borrowed my car," so be it; I guess you deserve whatever the heck you get. But I think most responsible people would say, "I'd be glad to give you the name. That son of a gun always borrows my car and I've been trying to get him to stop. This is a good way." There's a bit of humour in that, I guess, somewhere.

The only other thing I wanted to comment on was the last section of the bill. I forget what the section is. It was the amendments to the Provincial Offences Act. There's a section in here, and I hope I've got the right one here, that says, "If section 7 of the Highway Traffic Act authorizes an order or direction under this section that any permit under that act not be validated or issued"—and I talked about this a little while ago—"because payment of a fine is in default, a person designated by the regulations who is satisfied that payment of a fine is in default shall direct that until the fine is paid,

"(a) validation of any permit held by the person who has defaulted be refused; and

"(b) issuance of any permit to the person who has defaulted be refused."

I've already dealt with that in my comments earlier. I thought it was something else. No, I guess I have dealt with that. I made a note to myself to make sure to make comments on that, but I notice I got it in the explanatory notes.

With that, I appreciate the opportunity of having participated in this debate. I think I've made my points very clear. I see my good friends are here. They all want to participate in debate, I'm sure. Everybody has something to say about this bill that is very important, and I look forward to comments on this particular debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to stand and talk about Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads. I want to take the time that I have to highlight three key features of this legislation and why I'm proud to support it.

First of all is the new proposed subsection 106(7), which makes booster seats mandatory for children between 18 kilograms and 36 kilograms. Those are children who are too small for regular car seats and it extends to them the protection of a booster seat. Also something

that my friend across the aisle has talked about is the fact that this legislation extends the need for grandparents, caregivers and other providers to put their children in booster seats or car seats. The facts are, as Transport Canada statistics tell us, that we will reduce the injury to children by 75% by putting them in booster seats, and that children who use seat belts instead of booster seats are 3.5 times more likely to suffer significant risk for injury.

I want to talk for a few minutes about the prospect of grandparents and the extension to grandparents. I think of my own parents, who regularly shuffle my sister's children around. If you think about the fact that a grandparent obviously loves their grandchild so very much, what this legislation is about is informing those people who want nothing but the best for the children they're looking after about the risks they are placing children in if they do not put them in these protective mechanisms. We do have new studies and statistics and we do know the risks.

I also want to talk for a quick second about new section 57.1.1, which talks about the restrictions on teenage drivers carrying other teenage passengers. This legislation is about informing people about the risks that exist and the fact that young drivers are more at risk when they have passengers with them.

So it's an important piece of legislation to change behaviour in this province and I'm very proud to support it.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair wishes to bring to the House's attention that today is the birthday of the member from Scarborough Southwest, Lorenzo Berardinetti.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Let's do the birthday song.

The Acting Speaker: We'll leave that to Mr Ouellette from Oshawa, who is the next speaker.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much want to get further into this debate. I want to make a couple of comments for the member for Timmins-James Bay. Some of the areas that can be addressed in regard to loaning the vehicle: I know that Durham Regional Police, along with a number of other forces—I should congratulate all of those; it's their police appreciation night tonight—inform the insurance companies of misbehaviour by drivers, and the insurance companies get very active. Those individuals are very concerned about their insurance rates, and that's one way to address that issue very effectively.

Another point I want to bring out is that we're dealing with a lot of grey areas here. For example, this morning I was volunteering at a local school. I was working on the Kiss and Ride. What do you do when all of a sudden a taxi full of kids shows up? That's what happened this morning. A taxi full of kids showed up—no booster seats. What's going to take place with those individuals? How do they get to school? How is it going to be dealt with? I'm not really sure, but my intention is to bring up some of the grey areas.

Some of the areas that I think need to be addressed as well: I coach and manage a hockey team. What's going to happen about the buses with the hockey team that we take to various games throughout other parts of the province? When we take those kids out and put them on a bus, they're going to be in those weight and age categories, those kids I work with. Are they now going to have booster seats, and how is that going to play out?

Another one I wanted to make sure I got on the record was that I had a parent approach me who had some strong concerns about this legislation. Her concern was that her daughter is going to have to have a booster seat in the way the legislation is written right now. The difficulty is that the daughter is old enough to drive now. This daughter is going to fall inside that weight category. She's just an individual who is a very small, petite person who is going to have to wear a booster seat while she's driving in the car.

Those are some of the things I hope the government will be able to bring forward, as the member from Timmins-James Bay mentioned, through the committee process, and we can get some answers to them.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member from Timmins-James Bay, and he referred that we should not make this mandatory, but let me tell you that we are committed to the safety of our kids. By not having this bill in place at the present time, it has created, in 2002, 149 deaths on the highway. We just have to think of what happened in Quebec, of this daycare lady who took out eight of their kids and seven of them got killed because they were not tied with a seat belt.

When I look at it, 149 kids were killed on the highway in 2002 and the cost of those booster seats would be in the area of \$40 to \$150. It depends whether you buy a Volkswagen versus a Cadillac. So it's up to the parents, if they can't afford to pay \$150. But at the present time, why are we going up to the age of eight years or 80 pounds? It's because it shows at the present time that seat belts would not give protection to those kids. The seat belt could affect the organs of the child, so the booster seat would make sure the child doesn't get injured.

To refer to the insurance, like he said, at the present time the bus driver will be able to give the licence plate to the police. The police will do the investigation and, don't be afraid, it won't affect your demerit points on that or your insurance. But the police will make an investigation and find out who was driving the car. If it is a rented car, if it is a car that has been stolen, then the owner of the car won't be affected. But you can rest assured there would be a proper investigation.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues in the third party for an opportunity to comment on Bill 73 and the remarks of the member from Timmins-James Bay, which I thought were excellent.

We're making these remarks, and members in the assembly know that today is International Credit Union Day. The thing about the 6,000 people who work for the credit unions is that 80% of those jobs are outside the

GTA, and 39,000 small and medium-sized businesses are part of the credit unions. All members here know that credit unions and caisses populaires—

Mr Qaadri: It's not "cash populaire."

Mr Hudak: —caisses populaires provide well-paying, senior positions in many smaller Ontario communities, making a direct contribution of some \$375 million.

Interjection.

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Mr Hudak: The member asks, "Do they use booster seats and seat belts for the children?" I think the members of les caisses populaires and credit unions, as we celebrate International Credit Union Day, do their best to obey the law, but you have to think that for these particular individuals, heavily burdened on a financial level with the punishing new McGuinty health care tax of \$1,000, enforcing this law for children up to eight years old can be expensive, especially for a two-car family with grandparents, aunts and uncles and other caregivers.

It just shows the general approach, their loss of staying in touch with average working families in the province and the increasing financial burden—hydro costs, insurance rates, among others—and a bit of an approach by this government that Dalton McGuinty knows best, a bit of a nanny-state approach: how they take care of their children up to eight years old and transport them, the eradication of every gummi bear across the province of Ontario in the education system—

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Girl Guide cookies.

Mr Hudak: No more Girl Guide cookies. There will be cameras in the schools to ensure that not one Girl Guide cookie will be eaten. There's the ban on pit bulls, and, of course, to protect all of us from our own enjoyment of sushi, the health minister prioritizing the banning of sushi in the province of Ontario. You wonder if the priorities truly match those of working families.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I agree the caisses populaires and the credit unions of Ontario do everything they can to comply with all the laws, and yes, they have to have lots of cash at the caisses populaires.

I just want to say to my good friend the member from Prescott-Russell that I never said, and don't profess to say, we don't believe this should be mandatory; that's not the point.

Le point que j'ai fait, monsieur Lalonde, simplement dit est que oui, on a besoin d'avoir des lois qui peuvent protéger nos enfants, pareillement à ce que j'ai dit quand on a introduit des lois pour rendre obligatoires les ceintures dans les automobiles. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui y sont opposés, mais à la fin de la journée c'était l'affaire parfaitement correcte, la réponse que le gouvernement avait besoin de donner à une situation qui était très sérieuse.

Mais quand ça vient à ce projet de loi, je dis oui, je suis d'accord avec le projet de loi. Je pense que c'est important qu'on donne les outils nécessaires à la police et aux conducteurs d'autobus de tout de suite être capables

de rapporter une plaque d'immatriculation d'une personne qui a passé un autobus. Je pense que c'est très important.

Le seul point que je fait, c'est qu'il y a des complications quand on donne la contravention à l'automobile. Ça veut dire que la personne à qui appartient l'automobile peut être mise dans une situation d'être responsable pour quelque chose qu'elle n'a jamais fait. C'est possible qu'on ne le sait pas, si c'est un char qui a été volé. Comment tu t'organises avec ça? C'est ça le point que je fais.

Quand ça vient à la question de ce qu'on appelle les « booster seats » et de les rendre obligatoires dans les automobiles, je suis d'accord avec vous. C'est une bonne idée, oui. Mais encore, j'ai soulevé la question : pourquoi est-ce que grand-maman ou mon oncle, qui d'habitude ne ramasse pas les enfants, devrait être tout d'un coup dans une situation d'avoir une contravention pour aller ramasser les enfants, quand ce n'est pas normalement elle ou lui qui le fait, c'est d'habitude maman ou papa? C'est tout ce que j'ai dit.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke North. I'm just going to go through the initiatives in this bill one at a time and talk about my support for them, and see how far I will be able to get in my five minutes.

I want to begin with the proposal to make booster seats mandatory for preschool and primary grade students between 18 kilograms and 36 kilograms with a standing height less than 145 centimetres or a maximum age of eight years. That's a bit of a mouthful. But I have to tell you, my kid is on the edge of that. He is eight years old. He's a little boy and has just, probably in the last couple of weeks, couple of months, gone over the weight standard. So I recognize when people say that it's tough to put an eight-year-old in those seats. It is tough. He didn't want to sit in the booster seat when I told him he had to.

I have to tell you, I stopped using the booster seat about a year ago because none of his friends were in them. When we tabled this legislation originally, he was still under the weight. I thought about it, read the material on it and said, "You know what? It's just not worth taking the risk." So I made him go back into it. He didn't mind, as long as I hid it from his friends, and he sat in it.

Now he's over the weight. He plays hockey now with nine-year-olds, and he's an eight-year-old. If one of them ever caught him going to the hockey rink with it, I'm sure he'd be razzed, but again, the point is, what's more important: him taking a little bit of razzing, or the peace of mind of knowing that he's going to be safer and sounder when you're driving in your car?

The statistics that just riveted me were the fact that children using seat belts of that size were 3.5 times more likely to suffer serious injury; four times more likely to suffer a head injury. Sorry; I don't want to subject my kid to those odds. I'd rather risk him being a little bit

unnerved or a little bit embarrassed by the fact that he has to sit in one of these seats than risk him having a head injury or a serious injury.

The fact that it reduces the risk of injury or death by 75%, according to Transport Canada, is significant. The fact that 149 children and young children were killed on the roads in 2002 really gives you pause for thought. So as I said, I recognize that these standards will be difficult, for those kids who are on the age—to get their kids to sit in those seats, but it's worth the effort. It's really worth the effort.

Extending the seat requirements to other vehicles, like caregivers and grandparents—having just gone through that car seat and car booster seat period with my own parents, yes, it's a pain in the butt for grandparents to have to either shift the car seats or get a car seat or have a car seat that they can put into their car and, in some cases, leave it there, but as my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore said, grandparents love their kids dearly, and no grandparent is going to want to put their kids' health, safety or life at risk. So it's something that's worth doing. For the sake of a \$30 cost—maybe a little more, maybe a little less—it's worth the price. It's worth the cost.

There are people who talk about these situations where people are stranded out there, emergency situations—I mean, come on. We've got to have common sense. There are emergencies. We've got to be reasonable about this, and I'm sure that that happens. Sometimes your flasher might go out in the back of your car on your way home from work one day. It doesn't mean you're always going to get fined just because your flasher's out. There's reasonableness in the law. So I think it's something that, while it's a pain for grandparents, is something that's certainly worth the cost.

I look at it from my own personal experience too with a child. I've been tempted many times, and I've got to admit there have been times when I thought about running into a store really quick when he's back strapped into his car seat, locking the doors and running back out to get him so I don't have to disturb him. Just think of your child as all the money in the world you could ever earn. If you had a paper bag of money sitting in your car, would you just leave it in your front seat with the window down? No, you wouldn't. So you shouldn't think of a child as the same thing. A child is the most valuable thing in your life. It's more valuable, generally speaking, than your own life. So it's something that you should treasure, something that you have to hold dear, something that you have to ensure is protected at all turns, at all costs.

With regard to the bus safety initiatives, I really want to commend the minister for moving quickly on that. My time's running out. The automatic arm, making that mandatory—great move. The idea of putting the \$2,000 maximum fine on the back of the bus: People will think twice before they pass a bus because of that. The idea of allowing bus drivers to be able to report those who do pass buses with their lights flashing will help ensure that we have full enforcement.

I'll now pass it over to my colleague from Etobicoke North.

Mr Qaadri: I have a number of remarks to make, but I'd like to just begin by referencing the remarks made by the MPP from Timmins-James Bay, Mr Bisson. I think if anything can be concluded from his remarks—first of all, we'd like to salute him for actually coming forth to speak on a bill that deals with safety and motor vehicles all at the same time. In this time of post-traumatic stress that he must be suffering, I think that's very worthy. But I think if there's anything to be concluded from Mr Bisson's remarks, it is that he should probably at no point in the future ever be the driver of any automobile, certainly with passengers and, I would suggest to him, out of respect for himself.

Now, to speak specifically about the bill here, Bill 73, I think ultimately it's about the safety of our children.

1620

Mr Klees: Who writes this stuff?

Mr Qaadri: This is actually coming extemporaneously, to the MPP from Oak Ridges, unlike some of his own speeches that he just executed across the province.

In any case, I would like to say that, first of all, ultimately the studies, the institutes and the boards of safety are telling us that the number one cause of death in young children, unfortunately to this day, occurs in motor vehicles. I would like to speak specifically, and I would say passionately, about this issue not only as an MPP but also as a father and a doctor, because ultimately this is about the proper restraint that we must offer our children in motor vehicles, whether it's a car seat, a seat belt or a booster seat. Of course, the specifics of that are what this bill is talking about.

I'm reminded, for example, about a case we had of a patient, a five-and-a-half-year-old child. This happened about two and a half years ago. I think his estimated weight was probably about 50 pounds or so: just an average child who was actually not in a booster seat, as is being now recommended and being mandated and legislated by this particular bill, but just held by a seat belt.

As a physician I can say that, anatomically, a seat belt is just not made for kids of that age. For example, the upper belt may cross the neck area and the lower belt may cross the abdominal area. This young fellow involved in a motor vehicle accident basically ended up having a near-death experience, in fact a full rupture of the spleen. Eventually he was taken care of surgically, but it was a very traumatic condition and a traumatic experience for everyone involved.

It's precisely for this case and for others that unfortunately are even more tragic—for example, that may even lead to paralysis, paralyzation, in a number of kids—that the Ontario Medical Association, a worthy group if ever there was one, supports this particular bill. I quote from the OMA: "Booster seats save lives and prevent injury. No child of an appropriate age should be in an automobile without one." I think those of us who are entrusted with the care of kids and their families can

therefore speak very highly and in great support of this particular bill.

The other thing I'd like to mention is that, as has been raised in this House, the rollout of this bill by the Ministry of Transportation and in turn by the government of Ontario is actually being done in a staggered, slow and easy, measured way and with some applied intelligence, if you will. There is, for example, a one-year lead time. This will allow all the various communities and concerned stakeholders, the parents themselves, to learn about it, the children to adjust. Perhaps even schools will have programs to bring this to everyone's attention. Really, it's following the jurisdictions in Canada—Quebec, for example, and other provinces—that actually have this kind of legislation in force already.

With the limited time as well, one of the last adjustments we're making to the Highway Traffic Act in this particular bill is the idea of ensuring safety for buses. When drivers see the flashing lights, there will be other physical mechanisms—for example, safety crossing arms and warning signs about the fines involved—because unfortunately still to this day, there are a number of children who are involved in accidents with drivers not paying attention to the existing laws and passing buses that are flashing because they've just stopped to let off kids.

Finalement, ce projet de loi est une initiative très importante pour protéger nos enfants, qui sont ce qu'on a de plus précieux, our most precious resource, and to protect it is what this bill is all about.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to get up and make comments on the remarks of the members from Scarborough Centre and Etobicoke North. Particularly, I found it interesting that there was an analogy given by the member for Scarborough Centre around the value of children. I can tell you that, as a mother, the value of children is not something—

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): Scarborough Southwest.

Ms Horwath: Scarborough Southwest, I'm sorry. Is it Southwest or Centre?

Mr Duguid: Centre.

Ms Horwath: So I was right. Thanks, Mr Peterson, but I was right and you were wrong. No offence to the member.

Anyway, as a mother, I can tell you that I would agree in regard to the fact that there is no material value that you can put on children. Even to suggest that the child's value is akin to a sack of dollars is actually far off the mark. In fact, the value of children is something that can't be in any way affiliated with any kind of material object or amount of money.

As Mr Bisson said, and as we get further into this discussion, we will likely be supporting many parts of this bill, but we do believe there are some things in it that need to be cleaned up. We look forward to it being in committee.

As far as Dr Qaadri's remarks, the member from Etobicoke North, I'm not sure why those remarks began with a bit of an attack on my colleague Mr Bisson—

Mr Qaadri: It was a sympathy attack.

Ms Horwath: Oh, it was a sympathy attack? OK, that's fine. But nonetheless, I think these members have both raised the issues of the effect that this legislation can possibly have on the safety of children. Again, my son is not only a student who takes the school bus, but he has recently become a school bus patroller. So I look forward to the few changes we might possibly see. I think the members are describing a very positive move in all aspects of the legislation.

Mr Peterson: It's absolutely wonderful to rise on such a wonderful, interesting bill as the safety of our children. Of course, in children's planning, we have to do long-range planning.

It's very important that you note that today is not only the birthday of Lorenzo Berardinetti, but it's also the second-week anniversary of his wedding to wonderful Michelle Holland from Chatham, Ontario. Now I, being from southwestern Ontario, know where Chatham is, and this is a wonderful integration of the wonderful parts of Ontario that's happening.

They were married in Assisi, Italy, two weeks ago. The bride was wearing white and the groom was wearing a morning suit. This was not a morning suit spelled "our" but spelled "or," because he was extremely happy on this day. So it's wonderful not only to recognize his birthday and their wedding, but we know he will be using seat belts for his kids, probably next year. It's wonderful to acknowledge this today.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Halton.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On behalf of my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I just wanted to draw the House's attention to a number of people locally who did a considerable amount of work and essentially introduced the concept of booster seat legislation to the province of Ontario. Much of this work was done during the era of transportation minister Norm Sterling.

This group met with Minister Sterling and, as I mentioned, they did so much work. I'd like to mention some of the people's names: OPP Constable Mark Foster of the Simcoe detachment; Karin Marks from Haldimand-Norfolk REACH; much of this was also driven by Joanne Alessi—she is with the injury prevention unit of the Haldimand Norfolk Health Unit; and also Kim Henzy of the community action program for children.

At that time, as opposition members may recall, the government of the day had introduced this bill for first reading. I was checking with a more recent Minister of Transportation, Frank Klees, who could not recall the opposition at that time pushing for this. I was involved with the local people in my riding. I don't recall the official opposition at that time, the Liberal opposition, calling for this.

As we know, an election came along and, regrettably, much of this work didn't move forward. There were some kinks to work out of it. Mr Klees had pointed out some of the problems around cost and the practicality of something like this. I truly hope that the government doesn't ram this through without thinking it through.

1630

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre in reply.

Mr Duguid: I want to thank the members for Etobicoke North, Hamilton East, Mississauga South and Halton for contributing to this debate and for their comments.

In my concluding comments, I want to touch just a little bit on the proposal to limit the number of teenagers that young novice drivers can carry. I believe it's up to six months into their graduated licence procedure that they can't carry other teenage passengers in the car. We've just seen too many groups of teenagers, just learning to drive, going out, hitting those highways, not being experienced enough to handle the conditions and young people getting injured or killed. I think this is a very effective way to try to lessen that and reduce the number of young people who are killed, and save lives in the meantime.

I also want to touch on again, as I did at the end of my comments, some of the school bus safety provisions. I think it's very important that when we've had up to, I think it was, 12 kids that have been killed by their own school buses between around 1988 and 2001, this will be one way to ensure that doesn't happen. As a father whose son does use the school bus at least once a day, sometimes twice a day, depending on whether I can drop him off at school or at his before-and-after-school daycare, I've got to tell you that when I look at that and when you hear about these incidents, it absolutely terrifies you. When you take your kid to daycare or take your kid to school, you want to assume that they're safe. With these provisions, we will be able to have a little more comfort that our young people throughout the province are going to be safer when they head off to school.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): As the lead speaker, I'm going to inform the table that I'm going to take the full hour, although I've been fretting for about the last hour, wondering how I'm going to speak for a full hour on Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads. It was introduced by the transportation minister, Mr Takhar, on May 4, 2004.

It is a pleasure to join this debate as the new transportation critic for the Ontario PC Party. I've reviewed the media on this from when it was announced in May. I think most of it's fairly positive. I think what the government is trying to do is fairly positive. It has been pointed out by some of my colleagues on all sides of the House, though, that there are some concerns about the bill and that we would like to see it go to committee. I gather from hearing from some of the government mem-

bers that it probably is going to committee, but I haven't heard that for sure. So perhaps at the end of this hour, in response to questions and answers, someone from the government could indicate whether this actually is going to committee, because people may have concerns.

I know Mr Klees, the former transportation minister when we were last in government, indicated some concerns about the costs of the booster seats and some concerns—one of them was quite funny. In an exchange he had with Mr Takhar in this House, in terms of the new graduated licence requirements coming in, where only one 19-year-old is allowed in the car, I think Mr Klees one day said in here, "What if there are four 19-year-olds walking along the highway in the middle of a snowstorm and Mr Takhar's son is driving by," who we were pretending is in a graduated driving phase, "what would he do? Would he leave three of them at the side of the road?" I think the joke was, we thought the Liberals had a no-child-left-behind ideology, and clearly this bill has some problems in that regard.

First of all, before I give the viewing audience at home an overview once again of what exactly this bill does—and that's really important, because later I'll talk about an e-mail I received from a constituent who phoned four OPP detachments to try to figure out what the current rules are about booster seats. She wanted to know, if grandparents, for example, or your neighbour might be giving your child a lift to soccer practice or something, whether or not today you had to have a child in a booster seat, and if so, what are the regulations around that.

Apparently there is huge confusion. In August, four OPP detachments couldn't explain to my constituent what the frigging highway rules are now. So this bill may go a long way, I hope, and I hope there will be an advertising or public awareness campaign, not only about the school bus aspect of this bill but about the booster seats. I'm not a parent, but I have 14 nephews and nieces and I've had to put a few of them in booster seats and, I tell you, you need a PhD to operate some of these booster seats to do it properly. Education on that front is needed.

Before I give the summary again, I do want to say right now I'm supposed to be at the Recycling Council of Ontario, which is holding their awards dinner in my riding. I'm supposed to be speaking there, actually, and I'm not sure the people of the Recycling Council of Ontario give a hoot whether I'm here. I think I'm supposed to be there. I'll try to get there about 7 or 8 o'clock tonight. I want to thank Mary Munoch and the Adjala-Tosorontio Ratepayers' Association, who have done a terrific job—

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: They'll see it on the repeat on Sunday, I guess—who have done a terrific job of, first of all, recycling and diverting waste from the waste stream in Adjala-Tosorontio township. They're going to receive an award tonight, recognized by the provincial organization as leaders.

They've had a two-bag limit on their garbage for a couple years now and they've encouraged Simcoe county

to adopt that for January 1 of this year. The county looks like it's going to do that, with some exceptions in terms of, you might be able to buy a sticker or a band for some extra bags. Otherwise, I think it's going to do a lot toward encouraging people to recycle and divert waste from our landfill sites.

So I want to thank Mary Munoch, Leta Hall, Patricia O'Leary and all those great people down in Adjala-Tosorontio, and I want to congratulate them for the award they will receive this evening from the Recycling Council of Ontario.

Bill 73 covers three main areas: mandatory booster seats, safer school buses and new passenger restrictions for young drivers at the G2 level of their graduated driving licence regime.

In the area of booster seats, forward-facing booster seats will be required for children who are too big for a child car seat but too small to be protected by a seat belt. This includes preschool to primary grade children weighing between 18 kilograms and 36 kilograms—that's 40 to 80 pounds—with a standing height of less than 145 centimetres—that's four feet 10 inches—or a maximum age of eight years.

Demerit points will be applied to drivers who misuse or fail to use infant or toddler car seats or booster seats. I think that's really important. If it takes demerit points, then personally I agree with it. Fines aren't necessarily working at the moment. Demerit points kind of hit you a little harder than a fine, especially if you have money. You don't worry about the fine, and that's one of the reasons I was opposed to photo radar. But demerit points will hit everybody, rich or poor. It's important because we all drive along the highways every day and see kids who are not even in seat belts.

It's hard to believe in this day and age that kids would still be standing up in the backseats of SUVs and station wagons. It's hard to believe. Parents, God love them, go to great lengths to make sure their children are protected at school and at home and then for some reason many people get in the car and they don't properly secure their children. The statistics are completely awful in terms of the number of children killed each year. I think it is 20% of the accidents in the province involve children or 20% of the fatalities. I'd have to check that exactly, but it's something like that.

With respect to school bus safety, the bill will require all new school buses to "include a safety crossing arm to prevent children from walking into the bus driver's blind spot at the front of the bus." You certainly see those now on many of the buses. It will now be mandatory for all school buses.

"All school buses will have decals indicating a maximum \$2,000 fine for a first offence of passing a stopped school bus with flashing overhead lights," or red lights, as we used to call them.

"Vehicle owners may be charged if the vehicles are reported to have illegally passed a stopped school bus."

I know one of the reasons we want this bill to go to committee is that some people have a problem with that,

and I'm not sure I have totally made up my mind. It would make a school bus driver the police officer, as it were, in terms of reporting the offence. I know there is a statistic that the ministry has put out that says a recent Transport Canada survey found that one in three Canadian school bus drivers surveyed saw at least one vehicle illegally pass a stopped school bus every day. That tells you it is not a rare occurrence, and it is happening more often than it should.

1640

To me, it is just a cardinal rule. It was drilled into myself when I was 16, getting my licence in a rural, small-town area where we have lots of school buses. In fact, my high school, Banting Memorial High School in Alliston, used to have 72 school buses lined up every morning and every afternoon, and they probably have that many today. The fact of the matter is that it was really drilled into our heads not to ever pass a school bus and to stay well back, but apparently a lot of people need to be reminded of that. If this bill helps to improve safety and save the lives of children—I know Mr Pat Hoy, as a result of a death in his family, was very much pushing that as a member of the government but as a member of the Liberal opposition for years too.

On the graduated licence front, which is something that I think the NDP introduced in 1994, we made some changes. It had originated in this House as a private member's bill by David Turnbull. I can't remember which riding David had—Willowdale, I guess. David, when we were sitting in this House somewhere between 1990 and 1994, had introduced a private member's bill to bring in the graduated licence program.

As an MPP, I've got to admit that since that's come in I haven't had too many young people come to me and tell me they have a problem with it. In fact, we all go to our high schools every year as these young people are at that age and getting their licences, and I have had no one bring it up; I think one person. They usually bring up the fact that they can't get appropriate service from the Ministry of Transportation when they are going to get their driver's licence and that it takes too long to get an appointment and all those problems, but I haven't heard much. Maybe I'm wrong, and maybe I'll get a flood of e-mails and calls from people viewing this now that have problems with the graduated system, but I haven't seen or heard much wrong from the young people that are affected themselves.

Statistically, it seems to be helping. We seem to be having, at least in what I saw reported last year and the year before, fewer accidents among young people, because they are gradually gaining the full privilege of driving on our highways and roadways rather than being thrust right into it right away without the experience. But anyway, this bill will make some minor changes to that system.

It says:

"Currently, the number of passengers permitted in a vehicle driven by a G2 driver is limited to the number of working seat belts.

"A new regulation" that will be established under this act "would restrict the number of passengers that young G2 drivers, aged 19 and under, can carry." It will restrict the number of those passengers aged 19 and under.

"For the first six months, these drivers could carry one passenger aged 19 and under."

It goes back to the story about Frank Klees and Mr Takhar and their rather humorous exchange in this House about leaving three of the teenagers on the roadway in the middle of a snowstorm because you can only pick up one. There may be other examples; that was a rather humorous exchange. There may be other problems in this that I'm not thinking of, and again, that's why we need to bring it to committee and hear from the public at large.

"For the balance of their time in G2, or until the driver turns 20, these drivers could carry up to three passengers aged 19 and under." That is the last six months, I believe, of the G2 period. They will be allowed to pick up all the teenagers at the side of the road in the scenario that was brought forward in this House.

"These restrictions would not apply if the G2 driver is accompanied by a fully licenced driver with at least four years driving experience or if the passengers are family members, regardless of age"—a little bit of common sense there.

It says here from the ministry's notes that "An analysis of Ontario collision records for 2002 shows that G2 drivers aged 19 and under who carry passengers aged 19 and under are about three times more likely to be involved in a fatal or injury collision than G2 drivers aged 19 and under who carry passengers aged 20 and over."

Now that's a little complicated, but I think it refers to the carnage we often see, unfortunately, over long weekends etc. At the end of the weekend, we find ourselves reading or hearing through the media that a group of teenagers were in a car, that alcohol was involved and they ended up in a ditch and died. We've had that happen in all our ridings far too often.

This is a provision that some young people may be offended by, but it's a provision to make sure there is somebody with some driving experience in the car if there is going to be a number of teenagers in the car, or that the number of teenagers in the car is limited if there isn't somebody with greater driving experience in that car.

I don't think there are a lot of problems with this bill. I think most people in Ontario would say these are necessary or acceptable amendments to the way things currently are. But I think people are going to want to comment on it, particularly with respect to booster seats. Maybe we should be calling upon car manufacturers—you get all kinds of options in your car now—to maybe have a permanent seat for children that's properly designed. It would really help those of us who aren't particularly mechanically inclined to figure out how booster seats are to be properly installed in cars. I hear this all the time in my own family. Every one of my family members, and there are about five of them and

they are all parents, has complained at one time or another about the difficulty in making sure the child is secured properly in a booster seat. Kids hate them. I know that from experience.

I also received an e-mail when this issue was first announced—actually it was a little after that, on August 4—from Michael Jacobs, who is the editor of the *Springwater News*, a newspaper in Elmvale, in my riding. He had an e-mail exchange with one of my staff, Dave Prisco. He starts off his e-mail by asking, "Is the government going to move forward with this law?" We responded by saying that when it came up, as it is today, we'd be sure to let him know and to raise his concerns. He wants to do a story on it, I guess, or maybe an editorial.

The first thing he asked was that he'd like to clarify when this takes effect. I'm not sure when this will be proclaimed, so maybe in the two-minute response somebody on the government side could fill me in on exactly when this will come into effect. I know it's in my notes somewhere; I just haven't got there yet.

He said, "I would like to comment that I think it is 'cruel and unnecessary punishment' putting a little kid in a car seat. The poor kid cries and cries but by law you have to leave him/her there to cry some more if you are traveling down the road. Basically, if you left Toronto with your child, and you were heading to Ottawa, for example, you imprison the child for four, five hours. If I did that in my house, I'd be charged with child abuse."

I've seen examples of this myself. Many of the kids do not like the seats.

Another aspect is the size factor, and he's referring to the 40 to 80 pounds: "I have a buddy marrying a girl who probably only weighs 80 pounds, and they're both small." I guess he's implying that if you're not of large stature like myself, do you have to be in a booster seat under this law? I hope that's just humour, but it is one aspect of the law that perhaps we haven't thought of.

Finally, he says, "Tonight, I received an e-mail"—this is Michael Jacobs receiving an e-mail, which compounds the problem. I won't go through it all, except I'll mention again that I believe this particular e-mail was from a lady who phoned the Barrie OPP, the Barrie city police, the Huronia West OPP and the Midland OPP to try to find out what the current rules were. Under this bill it clarifies that it's between 40 and 80 pounds that you have to put the child in a booster seat, I believe. This is a lady trying to find out what the current rules are, the whole point really being that she then phoned the driver's licence office in Barrie and she still got no answer on what the current law was. So with this new law and some proper notification, advertising and public education, maybe we can clarify that.

1650

I'll tell you, I'm going to have a difficult time talking about this for an hour, so anybody who wants to send me any notes, chip in. Send me an e-mail on my BlackBerry, which I think somebody stole. Then I'd be able to carry on.

Let me read some of the media, because I did find some of that quite interesting. The Hamilton Spectator, the day after this bill was announced, May 5, 2004—Lee Prokaska is the writer of this story and he says:

“Cracking down on drivers who don’t stop for school buses when required by law is a good move on the part of the provincial government.

“At this point, police can’t lay a charge if they don’t know who was driving a vehicle that fails to stop. The province wants changes to allow charges against the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop.

“Some will argue that’s not fair to vehicle owners, who shouldn’t be held responsible for the actions of other drivers. That argument doesn’t wash on red-light cameras, photo radar or tolls, so we don’t accept it in this case.”

That’s the opinion of Mr Prokaska.

“Too many cars breeze by the yellow buses, despite the red roof lights blinking, the stop sign sticking out the side and the yellow arm extended.

“It’s possible some drivers, distracted and in a hurry, just don’t notice in time to stop. That can’t be said of all drivers.

“Anecdotally, bus drivers often remark on drivers who pull out and around a loading or unloading bus, clearly in too much of a hurry to worry about the safety of children.”

Again, it talks about Transport Canada. It says: “Transport Canada surveyed 340 bus drivers in 2001 and one in three saw at least one vehicle illegally pass a stopped school bus every day.

“Given that an estimated 800,000 children ride school buses daily in Ontario, traffic safety is a huge issue. We’re talking about our kids. We’re talking about getting them to school and home again safely. We should be unequivocal in insisting on adherence to the law.

“The penalties in Ontario are among the stiffest in the country—a maximum \$2,000 fine and six demerit points for a first offence and a maximum \$4,000 fine, six demerit points and possible imprisonment for subsequent offences.

“But if those stiff penalties can’t be enforced effectively, they won’t deter scofflaws. If vehicle owners start getting hit with fines, the message will sink in with them and they’ll be sure to pass it on to whomever they allow to drive their cars: Stop for the sake of the kids or it will cost you.”

That’s a commentary from the Hamilton Spectator.

I’ve got a few more here. An article that was critical of the bill was done by Connie Woodcock on May 5. It was an editorial, I guess, by Connie Woodcock, in the Toronto Sun, May 5, 2004. It says:

“Liberal governments love social engineering. A nip here, a tuck there, all in the name of building a better community.

“Of course, when you don’t have much money, you can’t do the big things—like fixing the health care system or providing low-income housing or giving the school system more cash.

“But you can do the little things—things that don’t cost anything but the price of a new law.

“The Ontario government yesterday unveiled its plan to amend the Highway Traffic Act to—among other things—toughen seatbelt laws, which on the surface doesn’t sound like a bad thing. Who can be against tougher seatbelt laws?”

Again, this is from Connie Woodcock of the Toronto Sun, May 5.

“It wants to make”—“it” being the government—“appropriate car seats mandatory for everyone who transports children, the only exceptions being taxis, emergency vehicles and out-of-province visitors. If you’re caught without them, you’ll get two demerit points.

“The law as it stands requires only parents to provide appropriate restraints for their children in the family vehicle. The new version will also make booster seats mandatory for children eight and under who weigh between 40 and 80 pounds.

“It sounds reasonable at first. But what are they really saying? By making appropriate restraints mandatory for everyone transporting a child, they’re making it impossible for parents to have a neighbour pick up a child in an emergency.”

Under the subtitle:

“Emergencies happen

“If you’re a parent, you know that emergencies happen frequently when Mom and Dad both work. Children get sick at school, they need a ride to soccer practice, they have to be picked up from daycare at exactly the right time. Sometimes, you have to ask someone for help.

“What makes a taxi safer than, say, the family van?”

“As for mandatory booster seats, come on. A 13-year-old could weigh 80 pounds or less. So why stop at age eight?”

“The argument for booster seats is that if you’re under 80 pounds, the seat belt crosses your throat instead of your chest. Well, duh. That’s exactly where it catches me. I’ve often wondered what will happen in an accident. Will I be squished by the air bag or merely have my neck broken?” I guess Connie isn’t as tall as I am.

She goes on to say, “And if, as the government claims, children wearing seat belts are 3.5 times more likely to be injured than children in booster seats, why aren’t restraints of some kind required on school buses?”

“Back in the 1990s, the province attempted to make bicycle helmets mandatory for everyone. It didn’t matter if you had 30 years of experience or if you never went further than the corner store; you’d still have to wear one.

“The public outcry was immediate. The government backed down.

“It’s almost laughable, especially if you remember pre-seat belt Ontario. My family used to jam five or six kids into the back of the car to go to the beach. One of my favourite childhood activities was to jounce down the road in the back of my grandfather’s truck, and we kids used to fight over who would get to ride on the top of the hay wagon or on the tractor’s fender.”

She ends by saying, “How did we ever survive?”

Well, she's right. But times have also changed, is what I would add, especially in terms of growing up in a small-town rural area. My father owned a pickup truck for many years. We had a family farm and have a family farm in Colgan, Ontario. I rode on the fender myself many a time with my uncle, Paul Keogh. I would prefer to ride on the hay wagon but we usually had to do the haying, which meant forking it up. We weren't a wealthy farm. We didn't have these big round balers. There were 40-pound or 60-pound bales. We would only be eight, nine, 10, 11 years old. But that's what you did; you helped out.

I'd say, times have changed, though. With gridlock, I know if I want to get to Toronto for an 8 o'clock meeting or an 8:30-in-the-morning meeting, I have to be leaving Barrie by pretty close to 5:30 or a quarter to 6, particularly in the wintertime. I'm astounded that just about every six months the rush-hour traffic jam seems to be moving further up. You seem to have to stop further up. It's almost getting to be Bradford where you have to slow down to get into Toronto now. On a good day, if you leave it too late to leave in the morning, between 7 and 9 in the morning you're stopped at King Road, anyway, and then you'll be jammed up again at Wonderland. This is going southbound on the 400, I should say. Then of course you'll be totally stopped at the interchange of the 400 and 401. Then you want to go eastbound on the 401 to get to Avenue Road or some north-south, because there is no good north-south road in Toronto to get from the 401 down to Queen's Park. You either have to take Avenue Road, Dufferin Street, Yonge Street or something like that. Anyway, it's becoming more and more of a nightmare.

What I would say in relation to this bill and Ms Woodcock's arguments is, the old days are gone. There are just far more cars and trucks on the road. Unfortunately, tougher laws are required to make sure that people respect each other on the road and, in the case of this bill, to make sure that they respect their children and they are properly buckled up, no longer riding on the fenders or on top of the hay wagons. We shouldn't even be doing that.

Farm accidents are going through the roof too. We had two very severe ones in my riding this summer. We had a terrible one—I'm sure Mr Elton Hall wouldn't mind me mentioning it. He's a walking medical miracle right now. He lives in Adjala, just outside of Alliston. He nearly died. I guess it was two or three years ago that we thought we were going to lose him. He broke ribs and just about every bone you could in your body. That was a farm accident; no one's fault. I'm sure Elton was doing everything right, but we have a lot of farm accidents.

1700

The other thing I would say in terms of being critical of this bill, that I could find, anyway—I just have to find it here. There is a Toronto Sun editorial, also on May 5, that says, "This Law is a Bus(t)." They've got brackets around the "t" to add to "bus."

"The McGuinty Liberals just don't get it.

"First they mused publicly about bringing back photo radar to bring in the cash they say they so badly need to begin to balance their books.

"That idea was furiously shot down—along with other non-starters (so far, at least) like the so-called 'fat tax' on meals under \$4, the tax on lottery winnings, etc.

"And rightly so. Photo radar is a bad idea because it's a blatant cash grab dressed up as public safety policy.

"But now, incredibly, the Liberals are going down the very same bad road with their proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

"As Sun Queen's Park reporter Alan Findlay first reported yesterday, the Grits are now going to charge owners of vehicles that illegally pass school buses—regardless of who was actually driving the offending car.

"The fines will be steep, as they already are for drivers who are caught committing this offence—up to \$2,000. Liberals say this is all for our own safety, to send the message, as one of them told Findlay, 'that this kind of reckless behaviour will not be tolerated on Ontario's roads.'

"All well and good. No one's advocating passing school buses here, nor would we advocate speeding, whether or not photo radar was in place. Both are dangerous and deadly.

"But therein lies the problem and the dishonesty with this type of law. If passing a stopped school bus, red flashing lights and all, is such a serious violation—and we agree it is—it should be subject not just to fines against whoever owns the car, but to real penalties like demerit points. (These can only be imposed if the owner is proven to be the driver.)

"As with photo radar, fines may deter some people, but they give those who can afford them a free pass—if you have the cash, feel free to sail on by that school bus.

"Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar, along with Chatham-Kent Liberal MPP Pat Hoy, who first proposed this fine as a private member's bill, may have good intentions. Their other proposals to make children safer around school buses are proof of that.

"But just because four other province and a handful of US states have opted to slap this type of fine on vehicle owners—even if they're innocent—doesn't make it right.

"It's an unfair punishment that we doubt would stand up to a challenge in court. More to the point, it's a sign of a cash-hungry government that's willing to invoke children to justify fudging on democratic principles. Shame."

So a fairly strong editorial against this one aspect of Bill 73 from the Toronto Sun on May 5. That's their opinion.

Again, this bill should go to committee so that all of these opinions can be aired.

I'm going to talk a little bit about some transportation issues, since this is a transportation bill—there's one other thing I want to do too. I'm going to do some transportation issues in my riding that I raised in this House, many of them on several occasions. I'd like to do that during the next half hour or so.

I do want to put on the record a note from my constituency assistant, Joy Parks. She has had a discussion with Cathy. I don't know Cathy's last name, but she works in the lawyer's office next to my constituency office in Collingwood at 50 Hume Street. She dropped in to explain to my constituency assistant. She says that the problem is that she not only has to drop off the children—I guess she works full-time and is lucky to have her mother care for her children during the day—but also unload the car seats. Her mother then must place the car seats into her vehicle if she wants to run errands with the children. The other option is to purchase car seats for each child to be used in her mother's car, or switch vehicles every morning. Cathy cannot afford to purchase another set of car seats, so every morning she drops the children and her car off to her mother, and then her mother takes her to work.

So this bill isn't going to help Cathy. It is something that needs to be talked about, though, in terms of what you do if it's the grandparents or, as we said before, the neighbour doing you a favour and taking your child, perhaps along with their own, to soccer or hockey practice or something. Do they all have to have the proper booster seats for these young children? Do they all have to have the proper child seats for these young children? I suspect the government will stay firm on this issue, but we still should hear from people like Cathy, who was good enough to take the time to come into my office in Collingwood and let us know her views just recently. The memo is dated October 21—today.

There are some huge issues, obviously, with respect to highway redevelopment in my riding. I've been quite angry about it. I just want to find my note here. The Ministry of Transportation and the Liberal government have done a huge disservice to my riding. I would hope it's not because they didn't win my riding and there isn't a government member there.

Four years ago, Ernie Eves as Treasurer—finance minister of the province—approved \$28 million for a realignment of Highway 26 between Stayner and Collingwood. As it is, phase 1 is less than seven kilometres, so it's not a big deal. It's a new road that would parallel the old Highway 26. So we passed the money. The Ministry of Transportation, when we were in government, did a very good job of polling the public. It took three years to buy the land. Certainly in phase 1 there were just over 100 property owners. Two of those property owners just settled recently. They would have been at the end of the phase in terms of how this highway is being built. The highway got started two years ago and by this year should have been substantially finished. We should have been driving on it either near the end of 2004 or the beginning of spring 2005.

Something funny happened. We had an election. Within a month of that election you guys stopped building the highway. You even took away the outhouses that the construction crew used; the construction crew is gone. You've got a not-even-half-built highway; you've got about a one-third-built highway. The clearing's done

for about four of the 6.8 kilometres. The roadbed is in for about two or three kilometres—no pavement, just gravel-topped, packed down. I don't know all my construction lingo, but you've got a half-built highway. It needs, I think, three more interchanges put in, a couple of bridges—a fair amount of work.

The point is, you're playing politics with this highway when the fact of the matter is, over 400 people have been injured since 1988, and almost 200 deaths since 1988, on the old strip of highway. It's a very busy piece of highway. You've got a lot of factories in Collingwood. When there's a shift change, the highway's jammed up between Collingwood and Stayner as everyone's trying to go south, if they live south. You have at least a million visitors on long weekends on that stretch of highway: half a million in Collingwood and half a million in Wasaga Beach. It's very busy.

I don't have all my stats, but I think there are 135 driveways on to the old stretch of road, so it's dangerous. There are people backing in and turning, so we were putting an expressway or the beginning of a bypass around Collingwood in phase 1.

I don't know how you can do that. I've asked Mr Takhar. We've had petitions, and I'm going to read some nasty letters from my constituents about this in a minute, totally crapping on the Liberals for what you've done. It's such a petty thing. You will never get re-elected—sorry, you've never been elected since Confederation in that part of the province and you never will in my lifetime. Your chances are going—if they ever were any good, I don't know, but they're certainly going downhill as a result of this partisan, political, absolutely lowest trick I've ever heard of in my life. This is a safety issue.

I bring it up to Mr Takhar, and he's a bright man. He's got a PhD, apparently. I wish he'd use his bloody noggin and understand that someone's going to get killed. The current mayor of Collingwood told me one day—I know he told me, but I can't remember the number. I think it was six or eight people he knew since he grew up in Collingwood, whom he's known over the years, who were killed on the old stretch of the highway. They're personal friends. You meet one fellow, who happens to be the mayor, and a good mayor, Terry Geddes, a nice fellow. He knows six to eight people personally, killed—not maimed, not injured, which would be bad enough—on the highway. You can almost talk to anyone in town who has lived there 20 or 30 years, the old families, many of them, there for 200 years, but anyone who has been there for a period of time will know someone who has been killed on the old stretch of the highway.

1710

I don't know how to get you guys to wake up. I have no idea. Morally, I don't know how you could do it. Secondly, I don't see how you're saving any money. This money was booked four years ago. When the ministry has been interviewed—by the way, you've silenced all the bureaucrats. If you phone the Owen Sound office of the Ministry of Transportation—which Bill Murdoch stopped talking to years ago and which I've stopped

talking to—we are not allowed to talk to them any more, but even when we were, I stopped talking to them because they're not the best office in the world. If you phone the London regional office, you're told, without any embarrassment, "We're not allowed to talk to you, Mr Wilson. You must phone the minister's office."

We were accused of doing that, but I don't really think we ever did it. I've heard it with my own ears, "It's arrogant Mike Harris and centralized government." You're actually doing it. It isn't just something the unions made up in their Days of Action as part of crapping all over us, or you guys made up in this House. You're actually doing it. You're actually silencing the bureaucrats, who love to build new highways. They would like to get going with this. Bill 73, which is a transportation bill, gives me the perfect opportunity to drive home these very critical safety transportation issues.

From Mr Takhar, the only answer I get, and I get it from Mr Caplan too, the minister of—I'm supposed to use their titles—public infrastructure something, is, "Everything is on hold." I'm telling you, for safety's sake, you shouldn't have this as part of your overall review of the province. Mr Bartolucci is here from the north.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): You wouldn't know what part because you've never been there.

Mr Wilson: We spent almost a billion dollars on roads in northern Ontario, and if you want to have a tit for tat that would be great. That will keep me going for 20 minutes. The fact of the matter is, you used to complain about safety issues on Highway 69, quite correctly. We tried to respond in a big way by constructing that highway, beginning at both ends to try to get it done within a decade or so.

Hon Mr Bartolucci: No, you didn't. That's the problem.

Mr Wilson: We did.

Hon Mr Bartolucci: You didn't.

Mr Wilson: We did. I've driven on it. I don't understand. You drive on it all the time. I've driven on it. I've seen the lanes.

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: Mr Speaker, I can't hear myself think. Could you tell the honourable member to have some respect about the safety issue where people have died on a highway, where they've done the absolute most immoral thing I've ever seen, which is to cancel a little strip of road, all because I guess a Conservative member got elected? Shame on you. You were elected to serve all the people of Ontario.

For the last 50 or 60 years, the Ontario PC Party has been the government in this province, and we served all the people. My predecessors and Bill Davis and Frank Miller all took great pride in serving all the people. I can remember being an assistant to George McCague, who was Chairman of Management Board for, I don't know, about 12 or 13 years. I worked for him for six before I was elected. George used to take great pride in helping

Bob Nixon get a sewage treatment plant or a water treatment plant for his riding. I remember that as a very good example. He used to take great pride in the camaraderie we used to have in this place, where you'd help each other. Yes, there are partisan days and partisan issues, but when it's a safety issue, I get nothing but arrogance from Mr Takhar, who is a bright man. I'm told he is a nice man. I get worse from Mr Caplan, absolutely worse: "It's all under review." That's terrible.

The second safety issue that I've brought up, and I should bring it up, that I've brought to the attention of this House and the ministers and the Premier, through petitions, through letters, through questions in this House, is the need for a traffic light at the entrance of the Nottawasaga Inn and Highway 89. We had two people killed there two years ago, both young employees of the Nottawasaga Inn, and they were coming to work.

Honda employs 4,000 people just down the road from this T, the intersection of the driveway of the Nottawasaga Inn, which by the way has behind it 500 or 600 homes, beautiful, called Green Briar; further on the property is Briar Hill. Anyway, a lot of people in this House would be very familiar with the Nottawasaga Inn, a five-star resort in my riding. The government does a lot of conferences there. It's a four-star resort in my riding. It's the highest rating, I think.

The fact of the matter is that Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, as transportation minister in June of last year, well before the election, came to the riding. He had studied the issue, had asked the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Transportation to look at the issue. The engineers agreed. They came with their charts and their maps, and we did a dog and pony show, as you might call it. Frank made the announcement. We explained. Frank, a smart minister, allowed the engineers to explain to the public. We had the 12 presidents of the 12 condominium associations of Green Briar there, along with some other residents and the owner of the Nottawasaga Inn, Lou Biffis, and some other guests. It all made sense of what exactly needed to be done at this piece of road on Highway 89 in front of the Nottawasaga Inn.

So it was approved. Frank had the money for it. We announced it. We got kudos. There was great expectation when your government came in that this would be a no-brainer, that you would put these lights up. I tell you, you can wait 22 minutes. I waited 18 minutes one day. My mother tells me she waited about 20 minutes trying to get on to Highway 89 at this particular section, or either end, a kilometre or two. My parents live probably about four kilometres down the road from this particular intersection, just in Alliston. The whole highway is jammed up. If you come over Sharp's Hill, when Honda gets out, 4,000 cars are on the highway and they're all going toward Angus, Barrie or Toronto, to where they live. Believe it or not, people commute from Toronto to work at Honda.

It isn't just Honda. Alliston is a booming place. We've never had a recession in Alliston in the 14 years I've been the member because we have all kinds of great big

companies, and they all get out around 3:15 or 4 o'clock. Honda is doing practically 24/7 shifts now. We built, Mike Harris did, a big \$68-million bypass around Alliston to accommodate all the truck traffic. We now have a big truck bypass around Alliston. It's worked out great—never had a complaint from the downtown merchants, so bypasses do work if you do it right. People are still shopping in Alliston, it's as busy as ever, and about 120 trucks an hour go on this road.

My point is that we had the thing approved. It was well before the election. It wasn't political. It's another safety issue. We need traffic lights so that the residents of Green Briar, mostly retired people—it's a retirement community. Thousands of people live there and someone is going to get killed. Two years ago two people got killed. Someone is going to get killed again. I personally lose my patience coming out of this convention centre and hotel. But you have no choice. To turn in either direction is difficult, particularly at those times of day when the plants are getting out and the highway is extremely busy.

Anyway, I get nothing but these form letters from Mr Takhar telling me that the traffic counts aren't high enough. His latest one was that they did traffic counts this June, a year after the announcement, and they say they don't justify it. These are the same engineers. I don't know what you've done to them, but these are the same good bureaucrats, really, who shouldn't be political one way or the other, who a year before were quite proud to come to the Nottawasaga Inn and explain to everyone why we needed these traffic lights.

1720

The fact of the matter is, it's a little embarrassing having to spend 20 minutes in traffic lights and a road in this place—we should have other issues—but you've cancelled these projects. The politics of it is, don't cancel them. Your candidate Mark Redmond, who lost rather badly to me in the last election, promised he would pursue these issues, particularly Highway 26. We had seven all-candidates' meetings, and these were top-of-mind issues for the people of the riding. You're making a liar out of your candidate. You're making him look bad. He's a former mayor of one of the townships in my riding, in Grey county. I assume you may want to run again some day. Well, you've pretty well annihilated his chances or any Liberal candidate's chances, because these are safety issues and people take them very seriously. They worry about them. We've had several hundred names on petitions from the people of Green Briar, asking for stoplights.

So my plea today is, before I have a sit-in in the middle of that highway, which I'm planning on doing before it gets too wintry—and it will, believe me, be a big story. I'm giving you a head's up. I am quite capable of doing it, and have done several things like that in my 14 years, which is why I have one of the largest pluralities in Canadian history and have had in three elections—because I'm not putting up with it. So you can take this as a threat. You can take this as whatever—and

by the way, I'm sure I'll get a few thousand senior citizens from Green Briar and Alliston who, when the golf course is closed—because there is a beautiful 45-hole golf course at this location where we need the lights also. I'm sure when they're not golfing, in about a month from now, they would be happy to join me in a massive protest in the middle of the highway. If I hold that highway up, I tell you, you're going to have—well, you're going to have a police problem, but you're also going to have an enormous media story because it's a vital east-west artery. It's the only east-west central Ontario artery, and you won't put any bloody stoplights on it. Just crazy. Just absolutely crazy.

Mr Klees: Unbelievable.

Mr Wilson: Unbelievable. It was a no-brainer, wasn't it, Frank, when we looked at it? And you can't do it.

By the way, don't believe me. Before you silenced the Owen Sound office, which deals with this part of the province, the Alliston Herald got hold of it, right after the lights were cancelled. I don't know the exact date of it. The bureaucrat that answers the phone says, "Oh, yeah, and we've set aside \$80,000 for those lights," and the owner of the Nottawasaga Inn was going to pay his portion, even though he doesn't have to. He was going to pay a portion also, quite willingly.

This was even after you got into office. We know what I'm saying is true because one of the bureaucrats did let slip out that we even have the money for these lights. But you cancelled it. It's embarrassing to have to get up and talk about these things. It's really shameful, actually.

I want to talk about something that we did, that I do regret. I'm probably speaking out of school, but on another transportation issue, I would really beg the government to consider some of these highways that we "downloaded." There's one in particular in my riding. I think we did the right thing in terms of Who Does What, and we gave taxation room, spending room to municipalities. We also gave, I think, three years' maintenance to little chunks of these former provincial highways, and we set up some pretty sensible criteria.

The one I want to point out is Highway 90 between Barrie and Angus, or Base Borden and Angus. It's a terrible stretch of road. It's a safety issue too, because it's very long and straight. There are almost no curves on most of it until you get near Barrie, and people speed on it. When all the factories in Barrie get out, people go to Angus, and at 4 o'clock or so each day you've got several thousand people coming out of Canadian Forces Base Borden going to their homes in Barrie and the surrounding area. So it's a traffic jam mess.

It fits our criteria perfectly. It is a local road. It starts at Barrie and ends at CFB Borden, or Angus, so it's very much a local road serving local needs. It's not a major north-south or east-west provincial highway. So it made sense, and we did give \$20 million or so to Simcoe county council at the time to maintain that piece of road.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): You downloaded all those roads.

Mr Wilson: I'm being perfectly honest here; I agree. I asked our ministers and they turned me down. I've asked this government to look at it, and you've turned me down. I'm asking you to look at it again. I'm not really asking as much as Dave Guergis, the mayor of Essa township, and the people he represents are.

They really just don't have enough money to keep up. Either we have to get back into—and this is what Ernie Eves told me one day when he was Premier; he said, "I think we'll try and get back into the road grant business" you know, when we used to do 50-50. I think we do 90-10 on connecting links and small towns still, on those projects, but we probably should get into the unconditional road grant business again, which is the way we handled these things in the past. We don't necessarily have to own the road, but we do have to give some money to municipalities for upkeep and maintenance and upgrades of these roads.

I mentioned Highway 90; it is getting torn up pretty well. I think the county has decided this year they will do a study on it, but the county of Simcoe is having a difficult time, as I'm sure many municipalities are, maintaining these pretty busy highways.

I want to talk about the speed limit on highway—by the way, before I finish Highway 26, I want to go back. I want to read from Wayne Noble, president of Howard Noble Insurance Ltd. They have offices in Alliston, Barrie, Collingwood, Stayner, Elmvale, Owen Sound and Meaford, so they're pretty big insurance brokers and they're very, very nice people. Wayne Noble is the son of Howard Noble, who started Noble Insurance. They are very reputable, wonderful insurance brokers in my riding, Joe Tascona's riding and Bill Murdoch's riding. It says:

"August 31, 2004

"Honourable Dalton McGuinty

"I cannot believe that our democratic process has been reduced to this level.

"Your government has cut off funding for a bypass on Highway 26 between Stayner and Collingwood because this riding did not elect a Liberal member to our provincial government in the last election."

I didn't even talk to Wayne Noble about this letter; it just appeared one day.

Mr Klees: I approved that.

Mr Wilson: Exactly. Mr Klees, when he was minister, approved that, and we were building it.

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: Lou, the point is that we were building it. You stopped it. No one can even believe it.

You know, the day the construction crew left in the middle of the summer, I went out there. I got so many calls that I drove from Toronto. I was at meetings down here and I drove back up to the riding in the middle of the afternoon. People were standing out there in the middle of what roadway is there, the half-finished roadway, just standing there with a bunch of reporters. The New VR was there, which is the biggest TV thing we have in our area, and the local print media people were there. We were all just standing there. We couldn't believe it. We

were all staring at this unfinished road going to nowhere, watching them actually remove—it's funny—the out-houses that the construction crews—that was the last thing to leave. They were going back to Ken Winter, who rents those out in my area, in the Singhampton area. It's a crappy business, but I'm sure it's good.

The fact of the matter is it was just an unbelievable moment. I didn't think I ever would see it in my life. I bring it to the government's attention in a very nice way, and they just tell me to bugger off, to get out of here, they couldn't care less.

Someone is going to die. I hate to say it. I have a degree in theology, and I would hate to say that it will be on your head, but it will be on your head—that and Highway 89. And forget about ever getting elected. There will have to be another Confederation of Canada before you ever get elected in that riding, if you keep this nonsense up. It has been Conservative provincially ever since Confederation. We have let her slip federally a few times, but I'm sure this isn't going to help any federal Liberal candidate either, if you want to get down to politics.

Anyway, I've been mutilating poor Mr Noble's letter.

"The engineers, police and numerous studies agree that Highway 26, as it exists now, is the most dangerous stretch of highway in this area. It has an extraordinary number of driveways, lanes and access points. It has been the scene of an untold number of accidents and many deaths over the years"—and Wayne has lived in the Collingwood area all of his life.

"I firmly hope no one else is injured on this highway before you restore the funding to complete this much-needed bypass."

That is Wayne Noble, president of Howard Noble Insurance Ltd.

So there you have one of the biggest brokers in my area, who would know first-hand about all the accident records, would know the stories behind those accidents because of the claims, unprompted, making a plea to the government.

The council in New Tecumseh also wanted me to mention their support for the traffic lights. It is such a big issue—I never, ever in 14 years—it is the first time I actually wrote a council and asked them to study the issue just in case Frank Klees and I were wrong or something and we didn't need traffic lights.

1730

It was the best service I have ever seen. Within a week they had passed a council resolution unanimously. They had a petition going. As soon as they found out that the lights Mr Klees had announced were cancelled, they were amazing, so I do want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for their support on this issue.

In fact, former mayor Larry Keogh, just before the last municipal elections, wrote in a letter that they actually went out and counted the cars coming out of Nottawasaga Inn, and they counted the time. I recall his letter. I read it into the record here on a previous occasion. At any given time, there could be 14 to 20 cars lined up trying to get on to Highway 89 to go east or west.

There is a letter to the editor from Allamby, if I could just find it here somewhere. Bear with me; you have been for an hour so far. Here it is, Alliston Herald, September 1, 2004: "Lights Outside the Inn Are a Safety Issue for Us All." In the minute and a half I have left:

"Some weeks ago the Herald carried an article concerning the need for a traffic light to serve the residents of Green Briar and clients using the facilities of the Nottawasaga Inn in accessing Highway 89 safely.

"The matter is still under discussion by all parties involved but little progress is being made, mainly due to bureaucratic tunnel vision."

What he means by "under discussion" is that after it was cancelled, we're now discussing trying to get the lights back up.

"The issue of the need for a traffic light at the location in question is a no-brainer even for government officials and one must wonder if there is a political motive for their foot-dragging. All levels of government tell us that they are completely supportive when it comes to the issue of safety for pedestrian, automotive and other modes of travel. This issue is all about safety and may I be so presumptuous as to make a case for the traffic light based on common sense."

At the end he says, "Is the government going to wait until it learns of a serious traffic accident that took the lives of innocent children, their parents, grandparents or all of the above before spending a few thousand dollars to put lights in place at this dangerous location? This spot where vulnerable souls have to play Russian roulette with traffic on Highway 89 travelling in excess of 100 kilometres per hour?"

"Let common sense prevail.

"T.D. Allamby,

"Alliston."

Thank you, Mr Allamby—I believe it is Mr Allamby—for a very common sense letter. It was a little longer than what I read into the record.

I want to once again plead with the government to deal with these safety issues in my riding, to get back to me in a timely way and stop ignoring the need just because there is a Conservative member in that riding.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: I want to congratulate Mr Wilson for his excellent leadoff for his party on this bill. I have to say that the member from Simcoe-Grey really was very creative in his discussion of the bill. I learned a lot from that process—

Interjection.

Ms Horwath: He learned it from Gilles—particularly bringing into the debate some of the e-mails he received on the particular piece of this bill as well as the news clippings. I thought that was very interesting.

I have to let you know that Lee Prokaska from the Hamilton Spectator is, in fact, Ms Prokaska. I think you referred to a Mr Prokaska, so Lee, on your behalf I am correcting that so that we know it's Ms Prokaska.

The follow-up, then, the last half an hour or so about some of the particular road safety issues and some of the

frustrations he has had in his own riding was a little bit off topic maybe, but certainly of interest to the people of Simcoe-Grey.

Nonetheless, I think it is interesting that Mr Wilson talked about the fact that kids don't like car seats. In fact, they don't. Children don't tend to like them, but often-times, when it comes to children, we as adults have to make sure we are doing the things that we know are appropriate for them.

I look forward to spending some time, myself, on the discussion of this legislation. I'll be doing that later on tonight, I believe, or maybe in a very few minutes, but I think that I'll skip the e-mails, news clippings and those kinds of things because, quite frankly, I think I'll be able to speak for 20 minutes on the substantive pieces of the bill, and look forward to doing that.

Mr Lalonde: I just want to bring up some information for the member from Simcoe-Grey. When he refers to a lady he knows of whose weight is less than 80 pounds, he doesn't have to worry about it, because it's up to the age of eight. If you are nine, 10 or 20 and your weight is less than 80 pounds, you don't have to have a booster seat.

But let me tell you that the MTO has also started to have discussions with car manufacturers in Ontario to have the possibility of having what we call a child-seat fastener. At the present time, we do have some cars or vans that are equipped with that steel bar behind the car seat to which you can tie those child car seats. This is under discussion, and I'm pretty sure that with the passing of Bill 73, manufacturers in Ontario would exercise our recommendation.

Also, when we refer to the \$2,000 that the car owners will be charged for having someone pass a school bus that has its red light on, definitely, as I said previously, the investigation will be carried out if we find out that the car had been stolen or if the car was rented. Then we will find out who was the driver if it is possible. But the owner of the vehicle doesn't have anything to worry about.

Let me come back to the car seat. I have a grandson who is three weeks old, and I'd be extremely happy to buy a child car seat so I would have him to drive around the area.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The grandson's name is Joshua.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Halton.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker, and I'll point out for the second time this afternoon that my riding is Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, not Halton.

I concur with our member from—and I'd better get my ridings correct now—Hamilton East. It was an excellent presentation and also a creative presentation by our transportation critic, the member for Simcoe-Grey.

I mentioned the work that local people in my area did on this issue: the OPP, the health unit and an organization called Haldimand-Norfolk REACH. Much of their work was done with the Toronto prevention council on child seat belt issues. It was based in Hamilton and, as we know, the incorrect use or non-use of child restraints was

and continues to be a safety issue. At that time, Transport Canada estimated that 33% of the child seats were being used incorrectly; some estimates went as high as 82%.

So with the deliberations with these various organizations—there was another group, the injury prevention program of the Waterloo region community health department. Working with those groups and local people, there was a wide array of statistics. We've heard a lot of the data about the injury statistics—head injuries and abdominal injuries. One thing that came forward at that time, apart from the request for legislation, was the need for further education, further prevention strategies, and information strategies beyond merely passing a law.

1740

The Acting Speaker: My apologies to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Barrett: Thank you.

The Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: Here I am. I am so glad, Mr Speaker, that you never mix up the name of my riding because it would be kind of hard. Timmins-James Bay is one of the ones you can remember so easily. Why? Because James Bay is this great big body of water up in northern Ontario. Did you know in my riding—

Mr Qaadri: Like the member?

Mr Bisson: That was not very nice. I'm deeply hurt by the member, but anyway I'll let it go by.

I can say to you, Mr Speaker, that in my riding I can boast of having both black bears and polar bears. I can boast of having whales and seals in my riding, which I do. Most people don't recognize that because James Bay is salt water, along with Hudson Bay, which is the other part of my riding. So Timmins-James Bay would be pretty hard to mix up if you always remember it's where all the polar bears are. By the way, them polar bears, you've got to be careful because they're pretty mean, nasty bears if you walk up on one. Anybody ever see a polar bear up live, out in the bush? Anybody see one? Oh, yes, he would know. My friend over here, Mr Peterson, would know. They're not these warm, cuddly things that you think they are. They're a nice animal. They're majestic, but God, they're huge.

I've got tell you this story. I know it's unrelated to this, but I have to tell you. A friend of mine up in Attawapiskat was out on the spring hunt this year and decided to take a snow machine and go further along the river to check on a buddy of his. He gets to his buddy's camp, his buddy's gone and there's a polar bear between him, his Ski-Doo and his buddy's camp, and he doesn't have his gun with him.

It was a heck of a story. The guy finally made it back to his snow machine. He says, "I cranked on that thing I don't know how many times. It always goes on the first crank. What happens when I get there? I crank, it won't start. I crank, it won't start. I'm cursing and kicking this machine in Cree. I'm doing everything I can. Finally, I get it going. I run with my machine and I run across my

buddy because he had gone to my camp without his gun because he had seen the bear and left it in his camp."

There were two guys without a gun with a polar bear in their camps. Some other time I'll tell you how the story ended.

The Acting Speaker: Interesting. A reply from the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Wilson: That was the member from Timmins-James Bay. That was about as on topic as I was on topic.

I appreciate your indulgence. It is a transportation bill. It deals with children in cars, bus safety and a few other issues. I thought it was very important and I appreciate the indulgence of the House to deal with these other really important transportation issues in my riding. Thank you to the NDP member for speaking and my colleague for speaking. I appreciate the information from the government side, M. Lalonde.

I will end by again saying that I hope someone from the government side, particularly the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Public Infrastructure, would get back to me in a positive way about these safety issues in my riding. They're not going to go away. You're going to get bad media out of them, bad press out of them. People already think badly about your government in terms of breaking 231 promises. They should be mentioning that you also undid a lot of the good we were doing, like building a new piece of Highway 26, like installing traffic lights on Highway 89 in front of the Nottawasaga Inn.

The fact of the matter is, to just do across-the-board cancellation of all these projects in Conservative members' ridings is, I think, immoral. It's certainly wrong. It's not the proud tradition of this province. It's not the tradition even of your party when Mr Peterson was in office. I was an assistant here in those days, and I don't remember too many low-handed things like this happening that were brought to the floor of the House. People were fair. Camaraderie was good. We were all here to work for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

These are major safety issues. I can't stress that enough. I look forward to the government getting back to me and finally giving us a positive response, given that I know that these issues I've brought up were fully funded, properly announced and were done for the benefit of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Horwath: It being almost 6 of the clock, I would recommend that the House adjourn.

The Acting Speaker: Are you moving adjournment of the House?

Ms Horwath: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Ms Horwath has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? It's agreed? OK.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm this evening.

The House adjourned at 1745.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

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Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
	Prue, Michael (ND)		Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-East York /		Hamilton West /	
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)
Springdale		Addington	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)		Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton-Centre		Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)		
Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint		
	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Kitchener Centre /	
		Kitchener-Centre	
Don Valley West /		Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Don Valley-Ouest		Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
	O'Toole, John (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence		London-Centre-Nord	
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)	London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L)
	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	London-Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
	Hudak, Tim (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Erie-Lincoln		Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre /	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L)
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
			Fonseca, Peter (L)
		Mississauga East /	
		Mississauga-Est	
		Mississauga South /	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga-Sud	
		Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
		Mississauga-Ouest	
		Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara-Centre	
		Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
		Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Zimmer, David (L)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakubski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York Centre / York-Centre	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York North / York-Nord	
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 21 October 2004

Jeudi 21 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX TERMINOLOGY HARMONIZATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'HARMONISATION DE LA TERMINOLOGIE FISCALE

Mr Phillips, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to revise terminology used in the French version of certain statutes / Projet de loi 105, Loi révisant la terminologie utilisée dans la version française de certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Bisson cannot be here at the moment; he's going to be coming back shortly. He's doing some French-language taping, as a matter of fact, with TFO. I indicated to my colleague the member from Timmins-James Bay that I would commence his one-hour leadoff on this bill in terms of debate.

Here it is now second reading. I would indicate to the Chair, although we should understand that the standing orders don't require that I indicate this, that I may well, in a rare occurrence, share the time with Mr Bisson. But I may not, because if Mr Bisson doesn't get here within the hour, Mr Bisson will have to wait his turn in rotation.

My wonderful colleague from Hamilton East, Andrea Horwath—and everybody in the province knows her—is here with us as well tonight. Michael Prue is up in our caucus room. Rosario Marchese is here. He dropped in. He's got some telephone calling to do. Howard Hampton and Shelley Martel are tending to their kids. As a matter of fact, Jonathan came in the top 20th percentile in the little school marathon that they did today—long-distance running.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): How long did he run?

Mr Kormos: He ran a long, long time. He runs physically as well as his father does politically or electorally. And Shelley was telling me earlier how incredibly proud and moved she was by Jonathan's successful completion of that very youthful marathon. Indeed, when she told me where he ranked, I thought that was pretty darn good.

Mr Chudleigh: He's probably going to bed early.

Mr Kormos: I'm sure that he's not watching the legislative channel. I'm sure he's going to be retiring early, and Shelley, bless her, will have no problem getting those kids into bed.

We are of course debating Bill 105, which has been to committee after first reading and may well go to committee again after second reading, depending upon the preference of this House—well, really depending upon the preference of any given single member of the chamber, right? Any one of us has the power to effectively force the bill into committee after second reading, notwithstanding that it has already been in committee after first reading, because going into committee after first reading is the sole prerogative of the government and not of opposition members.

This is a strange sitting evening because in the 16 years or so—some days it seems longer; some days it seems like it was only yesterday, doesn't it?—I have rarely have seen the House sit on Thursday evenings, but we're faced with peculiar times, and I suppose peculiar times prompt peculiar circumstances. So here we are.

1850

I got served with notices of motion today—oh, incredible. The government wants to sit until midnight every day in this week, the week after that and the week after that. Well, please don't play the Christmas ruse for me. I'll sit Christmas Day if I have to. I've got no sentimentality around Christmas. Please, as long as somebody feeds me in the morning, I'm good for the day.

Here we are debating Bill 105, Speaker. Let me compliment you on your ascension to the chair, member from Oshawa. You're an impressive member, and even more impressive when you're in the chair.

I was telling you last night, you recall, when Mr Barrett was speaking—I wasn't heckling Mr Barrett, but I was interrupting him and he was responding to me such that Hansard then recorded the comments that I was making. That's one of the nice things about sitting right here, because Hansard has no trouble hearing me when I'm engaging in that.

I was just telling Ms Horwath, as a matter of fact, how on Sunday I was down at St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church in Welland, where we celebrated the fall dinner. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of ordination of Father Angyal from Windsor. We also had a chance to meet, for the first time, Father Miskel. He's a Hungarian from Slovakia, which isn't an unusual thing. He just got into town last Wednesday from Slovakia and has never been to Canada before. He's the new pastor for Our Lady of Hungary Roman Catholic Church on

Hellems Avenue, just beside the Hungarian Hall on Hellems Avenue.

In addition, we had as a welcome return guest at that dinner Reverend Kántor from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church in Delhi. That's how it happened that Mr Barrett, who is of course the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, was speaking. That's how we had occasion to exchange, because Reverend Kántor was speaking highly of Mr Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Reverend Kántor and others were at the Hungarian Hall, and Mr Barrett showed up as the MPP and wanted to be right in the kitchen, right where all the action was. He spoke with the people, the cooks in there, a lot of women and some men who work incredibly hard preparing wonderful meals. I had occasion to compliment Mr Barrett last night on the high regard with which these people hold him and how pleased they were that he dropped by the Hungarian Hall.

I was so pleased to have Reverend Kántor in Welland again. Don't forget, this is a generation of Hungarian-Canadians. In the case of Reverend Kántor, he was telling me that he left Hungary, not unpredictably, in the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution. He was a 19-year-old, he told me, at the time, and he left with his father. His father was a cabinetmaker. They ended up in Connecticut, where there were some aunts, as I recall him telling me. As a young man, 19 years old and still a student, he was moving to Connecticut.

Again, when we think of a European or any immigrant to the United States, we think of them going to perhaps more cosmopolitan communities: New York City—bigger, broader New York City; Chicago; Cleveland; any one of those cities that has a reputation or that you identify with immigrant communities. Connecticut, somehow, perhaps naively, least of all in the 1950s in the United States—you know what our image is of Connecticut.

Then again, I think Toronto wasn't a very multi-ethnic community back in the 1950s, was it? It was a pretty Anglo community.

I was down in the summer months for the South Asian festival along Gerrard Street East, where the South Asian community is now. It was a wonderful festival. It's Marilyn Churley's riding. Walking down the street—and again, it's a lot of South Asian families who live and work there; their shops are there and their restaurants. Then you see some of the signs that are chiselled into the cornerstones, and I identified that as a very Anglo-Irish neighbourhood—totally transformed.

Mind you, in its own day it was an immigrant neighbourhood. When Irish immigrants were living there, settling there, it was an immigrant neighbourhood too. That's an incredible transformation, but again, let's not forget that Toronto in the 1950s was not a particularly—when I say ethnic, I perhaps am inaccurate. Far too often maybe it's just bad form to deny ethnic flavour or character to Anglo-speaking immigrants, because of course Irish is an ethnicity. Again, I just found it strange that Reverend Kántor's family ended up in Connecticut, of all places.

He first became a tool and die maker and then went into the ministry. He has been all over the United States, including Buffalo, and ended up in Delhi, which as you know has a strong Hungarian community, a strong Belgian community, a strong German community, amongst others, and a Polish community as well.

So there I was at the St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church, as I was telling Ms Horwath during our supper break this evening, with this wonderful collection of people. Father Angyal, of course, from Windsor is a frequent visitor to Welland and to the Greek Catholic and the Hungarian community there. Father Miskei, as I say, speaks far better English than I do Hungarian or Slovak, make no mistake about that—far, far better. It was a delight meeting him, and I extended a sincere welcome to him on behalf of the community.

We're just so fortunate that people of this calibre choose Canada, as this world becomes smaller and smaller, when the choices become greater—really they do—that they choose Canada. I am convinced that every time a new Canadian sets foot on Canadian soil, regardless of where they're from in the world, this country becomes richer and stronger; this country's prosperity is reinforced. The incredible wealth of talent and skill that new Canadians bring to this country is just tremendous.

Of course, one of the concerns that I'm sure all of us in this Legislature continue to have—and I know that Bill 105 is not, in and of itself, any sort of panacea for this particular problem—is the underutilization of the tremendous skills and talents that new Canadians bring with them to this country. It's trite to say, but there are far too many new Canadians who were delivering babies in their homeland but now are delivering pizzas in Canada—yes, and even in Ontario.

One doesn't have to be altruistic to support this campaign for recognition of the skills and capacity and training of foreign-trained professionals. One could be very self-interested; one could be very selfish. It is an incredible waste of resources to have an engineer, a doctor, a veterinarian, a nurse, any number of incredibly skilled trades and professions, grossly underemployed. We're all losers when that happens.

That's why, while Bill 105 doesn't specifically address this issue, I think it is important that—I have no hesitation in seizing this occasion to make the plea once again, yet once again, for us as a province, and the province certainly can't do it alone. There's a whole lot of responsibility that rests with the federal government to expedite this process of recognizing foreign-trained professionals. We're so blessed with these people, women and men who come to Canada under any number of circumstances and who are so underemployed once they get here.

1900

I appreciate that Bill 105 doesn't reflect any of the promises made by the Liberals during the course of the election campaign, but much has been made of the campaign promises and the aftermath of that election campaign.

I'm reminded of the story of the very senior Liberal politician, and this fellow apparently had held elected positions in city councils, in provincial government, in federal government and had gone on to join the Senate. He was in his senior years but he was tragically killed in a motor vehicle accident. A truck ran him over as he was crossing the street. This very senior and experienced Liberal politician of course was rapidly sent to heaven, where he was confronted by Saint Peter. Saint Peter said, "It's rare that we get politicians of your experience up here in heaven in the first place, but now that you're here, I want you to know that the rules are that you get to choose where you want to spend eternity—in heaven or in hell." This now sadly, tragically dead Liberal politician said, "That's easy; I want to spend eternity in heaven." Saint Peter said, "No, no, no. It's not a matter of just making a choice; you have to spend one day in hell first and one day in heaven before you make that choice."

So this very senior Liberal politician, who may well have been one of the authors, one of the protagonists, of Bill 105, took the elevator down to hell. The elevator doors opened and he saw beautiful greenery and flowing streams and crisp, sunlit skies. He started to recognize it. He was in hell, and he started to recognize a whole lot of his former colleagues. They were impeccably dressed and eating caviar and lobster and drinking champagne from Waterford crystal. They were laughing and singing. Indeed, the Devil himself joined our sadly, tragically deceased Liberal politician. They told jokes and they bantered. Time went by so quickly; it was such a beautiful place. Time flies when you're having fun.

Before you knew it, the 24 hours were over and our deceased Liberal politician had to take the elevator up to heaven and experience his 24 hours there. In heaven there were clouds, and he spent time with angels and they played harps and they sang a lot. Sure enough, that 24 hours went by quickly. Saint Peter had the tragically deceased Liberal politician brought before him and said, "Well, you have to make your choice." The politician said, "I never thought I'd say this. Heaven is very nice, but hell was exceptional. So many of my friends are there, and it is such a wonderful, beautiful place that I've got to tell you that, yes, I select, I pick, I choose to spend my eternity in hell."

He took the elevator down, and the elevator doors opened and he marched out, only to be confronted by a dry, arid, barren landscape. All the people who were well-groomed and happy and well-dressed before, including so many of his old friends, were in rags and tatters. They were thirsty and they were hungry, and their skin was burnt and dry from the blazing, hot sun. Lucifer was standing there—Satan—with his arms crossed. The deceased Liberal politician said, "I don't believe this. Two days ago, when I was here, this was so beautiful. How could this happen?" Lucifer said, "It's simple. Two days ago, you were still campaigning. Today, they voted."

It's a very long story, but the moral is so apt. You see, two days ago, we were still campaigning. After folks

voted, my goodness, they sure got confronted with a different reality. It's, "Yikes, how could this happen? How could this be? What gives here? What's going on?"

I was just down at the Toronto Hilton hotel on a picket line with some members of HERE, who were locked out by the Airport Hilton on Monday. They were locked out. They haven't had a contract since April. We're talking about cleaning staff, the folks who clean your room, your bathtub, your toilet, your sink and make your bed. I'm talking about the folks who clean the corridors of that hotel. It's a high-priced hotel. It's the Airport Hilton. We're talking about servers and waiters and backroom kitchen staff. They haven't had a contract in six months, and then they were locked out. They didn't go on strike, Ms Horwath; they were locked out by management, their jobs taken over by scabs crossing picket lines. A whole lot of these workers are women, and a whole lot of these workers are new Canadians, people who came here with optimism, people who came here with enthusiasm.

What are the issues of the negotiations? Well, the Airport Hilton is trying to force the cleaning staff—people who clean rooms, most of them women—into doing it on piecework instead of on an hourly salary. Quite frankly, one of the efforts, one of the struggles of hotel-industry employees in the city of Toronto and across this province has been to reduce the number of rooms a day that they're required to clean. You're talking about quotas imposed on them of 12 to 14 rooms a day. It doesn't matter whether some drunk the night before left a hellish mess that involves getting on one's hands and knees and not only scrubbing the toilet and bathroom facilities but the carpet as well. It doesn't matter whether the people left the snotty, snarky penny on the side table as some sort of joke, a gag pourboire.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): "Pourboire" is a French word.

Mr Kormos: Well, Bill 105 is about French-language amendments to various tax legislation.

I stood with those people with great pride, because one of the other issues that's a subject matter of their negotiations—negotiations that the Airport Hilton has refused to participate in in good faith, and has forced them on to the streets by locking them out—is the theft of their tips by the Airport Hilton.

Let me explain to you how that happens. We're all familiar with booking events for our family or for sports clubs or political parties or any number of things, whether it's a group of six or a group of 60. We're told by the caterer, by the company that's going to accommodate us, that there will be a service charge added: 15%. Well, the only conclusion that's drawn by any of us who, as consumers, make that contract is that it's a 15% tip, a gratuity, the pourboire for those wait staff and kitchen staff and people who accommodate us. Well, at the Airport Hilton, they charge a 15% service charge for events like weddings and banquets. The workers don't see a penny of it; not a penny.

Now, where I come from, that's called stealing. Where I come from, it's called stealing from hard-working

people who work really hard for very modest wages. You've got a big multinational company like the Hilton hotel chain—and this is the Hilton chain that's based in the United Kingdom—that rips off these hard-working women and men and, quite frankly, deceives their customers. It's a deceit of their customers too, because people sign those contracts and say, "OK, the tip is taken care of." You've been to some of these banquets. Sometimes you pass the bread basket, where people throw in a toonie or \$4 or \$5, because that's the tip. But in this case we don't have to do that. It's embarrassing to do that at a wedding. You're not likely to do it. You say, "It's OK. It's no problem, because the 15% is added to the bill." But the Airport Hilton's scab bosses rip off those workers by stealing from them the tip that's added to the bill for a banquet service.

These people are locked out, and scabs are being bused across their picket line. You see, these are workers who know that if we still had NDP anti-scab legislation in this province, they never would have been locked out, that they would have been allowed to stay working at their jobs, which they were pleased to do, notwithstanding not having a contract for six months, and there would be meaningful and real negotiations.

1910

Why, these people had less than pleasurable memories of the two terms of previous government. They, I'm sure, like so many others—and I'll bet you money that some of them voted Liberal; I bet you money some did. As a matter of fact, it's a pretty safe bet. I mean, 145 workers—you can bet your boots some of them voted Liberal. A lot voted NDP; I suspect they did. I don't think any voted Tory, but some voted Liberal. If they weren't citizens yet and couldn't vote, I'm sure they might have taken a Liberal sign and put it on their front porch, because they believed the Liberals when they were campaigning and they believed Dalton McGuinty and his message of change. But here we go: People voted for change and they got more of the same. They got a government here at Queen's Park, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, that tinkers with labour law reform—tinkers—yet won't come close to the real issues, like the need to restore anti-scab legislation in this province so that those workers, like those workers at the Airport Hilton, those 145 women and men, hard-, hard-, hard-working women and men, many of them—please, don't get me wrong. I mean, look, don't try the line, "Oh well, maybe those are the best jobs they deserve." They're a whole lot of educated people. You remember how I started these comments by talking about foreign-trained professionals. You've got a whole lot of well-educated people cleaning those hotel rooms at the Airport Hilton, serving those meals, working hard as dishwashers and food prep people in the kitchens and cleaning hallways and scrubbing down carpets and banquet rooms.

So the two are very much related. And I say this government would do right were it to move quickly to reinstate anti-scab legislation, although I understand that it would be hard-pressed to do so in view of the fact that

it supported the newly elected Conservative government's, Mike Harris's government's, repeal of that same legislation back in 1995, after that election which put Conservatives into power here at Queen's Park.

The other day we had the chicken farmers here—a good group of people. I think most areas of the province are covered, unless you get really far north, but especially down where I'm from, the central south through north of Lake Ontario, down into the southwest—they had a map of, I think, seven districts of chicken farmers; all this for a law, but you saw the map they produced. And again, Mr Ouellette would know some of these chicken farmers, entrepreneurs, some third- or fourth-generation.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I worked on a chicken farm.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to get to that. I'm going to get to working on a chicken farm.

We spoke with those people about some of their special interests—I don't think it's inappropriate to call them special interests—one of them being the need to preserve the federal tariffs to protect them from cheaply produced chicken, in particular from Brazil. These farmers are at risk from a federal government that is going to sell them out. You know that, don't you? These chicken farmers are at risk from a federal government that is going to sell them out at the bargaining table. And it's not that there isn't already a window for imported chickens. Indeed there is a significant number—I think it's 7.5%—of imported chickens. It's only after that that the quota kicks in.

One of the hardest-working groups of people I have ever met are chicken catchers. One of the hardest-working groups of women and men I have ever had occasion to know, and I'm proud of them, are chicken catchers. You can spot a chicken catcher half a mile away, because the chicken catcher has clawed and scratched-up wrists, often infected and pus-y. The chicken catcher has puffy, pus-y eyes—I'll explain that to you in just a minute—and oftentimes infected nostrils and ears.

I know these people. They are part of that community of invisible workers in our society. We don't see them. We see firefighters, police officers and teachers and nurses, as we should. But we don't see those workers at the Airport Hilton who have been forced out on to a picket line because they've been locked out, because they're working in the bowels of the kitchen, or they come to your room after you're gone. Think about this: You're talking about women and men who are on their hands and knees scrubbing toilets and bathtubs almost twice every hour, scrubbing out a toilet and a bathtub and a sink twice every hour on their hands and knees, and making beds and turning mattresses. You're talking about hotel workers, an industry and a job class that has high, high rates of injuries, especially back problems, because of the lifting.

Chicken catchers: I can tell you that we have a strong community of chicken catchers down where I come from in Niagara and, I think, in every part of the province where chickens are produced. They are bused out,

trucked out, vanned out to chicken barns, usually in the dark of night. I know one of the Liberals, Mrs Van Bommel, could elaborate on this, because she's a chicken farmer. You're talking about barns that contain not just 50 chickens, not 150 chickens but thousands of chickens. And you're talking about an industry that doesn't have any standards around health and safety. You're not talking about an industry that, as part of its culture, has safety clothing assigned to it—safety boots and goggles. Many chicken catchers even bring their own bottle of water, because they can't necessarily expect to get water—it's piecework.

They rush into these chicken barns with thousands of chickens and literally chase them—the chickens don't like to be caught, do they, Mr Ouellette?—and there is a dust storm of chicken feces and chicken urine and various mites and insects. That's what causes the infected nostrils and the infected eyes. Of course, as they are being caught, the chickens will urinate into the chicken catcher's eyes, causing incredible discomfort and, quite frankly, pain, and the chickens will claw away and scratch the wrists, and those wrists will get infected. You're in a condition where you can't run out and wash off with anti-bacterial soap every time you catch a chicken; you have to keep chasing these damned things and getting them into crates, and other people are throwing those crates on to the back of the huge trucks that you see from time to time travelling across the 400-series highways and the QEW.

These are hard-working women and men. They understand that they are not in a high-wage industry; they know that. They know that they're never going to be shopping at Holt Renfrew or at any of those places on Bloor Street; they know that.

1920

They know that, as often as not, rather than buying the groceries at a Loblaws or a Zehrs or Pupo's, they're going to be at the food bank. Because when you're a low-wage worker like that, with an unstable, irregular income, you're one of the working poor, you're one of that increasing number of people here in the city of Toronto—my Toronto colleagues will confirm this—where to work and to be working steadily doesn't necessarily mean that you have a home. Does it, Mr Prue?

Mr Prue: It doesn't.

Mr Kormos: Because when you're working for minimum wage in the city of Toronto, and in most other parts of this province as well—in fact, probably all of them—why, notwithstanding that you're working 40, 45 hours a week, you're homeless. Of course, this is one of the reasons why a whole lot of minimum-wage people—a whole lot; not all of them. And I dare say that very few voted for Conservatives in the election of last year because they saw what eight years, two terms, of Conservative government did with respect to minimum wage. They did. Not a penny increase. The last increase was by the New Democrats. Not a penny increase in over eight years.

Not all of them, but I'm sure a whole lot of minimum-wage people voted NDP. But I think a whole lot also

voted Liberal because they believed Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals and their candidates and their high-priced slick campaign ads on television and billboards and radio, that voting for Liberals meant voting for change. Well, those same minimum-wage people find themselves getting poorer and poorer because the few-cents-an-hour increase that the Liberals eventually gave them doesn't even begin to make up for the wage reduction they suffered over the course of eight years, Mr Ouellette. It doesn't even begin to compensate for eight years of zero increment.

So after eight years—the last time minimum-wage workers enjoyed a wage increase was during the NDP government of 1990-95—they get insulted by this government with coins. They got nickelled-and-dimed by the Liberals, the same Liberals who'll charge fat-cat rich friends five grand a pop to come to their fundraising dinners. But when it comes to the poorest workers out there: nickelled-and-dimed.

Chicken catchers are among those poorest of workers. Quite frankly, so are the women and men who work in the hospitality industry, like those workers at the Airport Hilton who were forced on to the street by the Airport Hilton hotel. The interesting thing is, of course, that the Airport Hilton, when it takes reservations or when it gets calls and people want a room, don't tell potential guests that they just threw all their workers out on to the street and that there's going to be a picket line.

I guess we're telling folks now. The Airport Hilton is a scab hotel at the moment. It's employing scab workers. It's forced its workers out on to the street, and it's stealing and has been stealing. The Airport Hilton and its management are thieves. They have been stealing money from those workers because they've been ripping them off, stealing the gratuity that has been attached to banquet hall and similar bills being paid by customers of the Airport Hilton, without telling those customers, of course, that that money is not going to those workers.

The New Democrats have no hesitation standing shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, in solidarity, side by side with every one of those workers—and their union. Let's face it, if there weren't a union, those workers wouldn't be negotiating anything, and there would be no process whatsoever.

I've got folks down where I come from—you folks will remember the Ramundo family. They run Celi and Presti; I was in there last Saturday. Celi and Presti is a long-time family-run business. It's an Italian delicatessen, a small supermarket delicatessen. You go there for the cheeses, the Italian-style cured meats—prosciutto, capicollo, things like that—just outstanding food. It's either them or Joe's gelateria up the road on Crowland Avenue.

I remember when the first record highs occurred in electricity prices when the Tories commenced the deregulation of electricity. Celi and Presti, and the Ramundo family, like everybody else who as small entrepreneurs, small business people struggling and working hard—these people don't know what holidays are, they

don't know what a day off is, they don't know what overtime is. They work. That's all they know. They work from early in the morning until late at night. And do you know what? They've still got time for their community and they've still got time for their church. I know that the Ramundo family is very supportive of St Mary's church over on Hellens Avenue. They work hard. They work seven days a week from early morning until late at night and they've still got time for family, they've still got time for community and they've still got time for church. But these are people who started ringing the alarm bells. They rang the alarm bells around the impact of high electricity prices on small businesses like theirs. And they're going to be hit again. The caps are off.

The government is talking about smart meters. If you have thousands of dollars of meat sitting in a cooler to keep fresh for your customers, you can't plug in and unplug the cooler so it only operates when the smart meter tells you electricity is cheaper. It simply doesn't work that way. One prosciutto can cost as much as \$300. You know what I mean—the cured pressed ham. A good-quality prosciutto can cost \$300. So it's just naive, it's silly, to tell small entrepreneurs like the owners of Celi and Presti that somehow smart meters are going to reduce their electricity costs. It is downright, plain silly, and it's not particularly straightforward or honest either.

These are, again, hard-working people. They are never going to buy \$75,000 BMWs. They're never going to own a condo somewhere in a tropical or subtropical zone; not even a time-share. They worked hard, they saved, they made sure their kids got far better educations than they did—we know that's so typical. As it is, the Ramundos are new Canadians in their own right, a long time here but new Canadians in their own right, first-generation immigrants from Italy. They were hell-bent that their kids weren't going to spend their lives working 16 hours a day in a groceteria or a delicatessen. Their kids were going to get educations, and they did. Just like those women and men I was standing with today on their picket line outside the Hilton hotel—again, not to suggest they aren't well-educated. There would be a whole lot of people in that group I was with who are very well-educated, but because of our xenophobic reluctance to recognize foreign-trained professionals, they simply don't have the opportunities they should have. But those people are going to work hard.

Being that level of worker in the hotel industry is a tough, tough way to make a buck. But they'll do it. Just like their sisters and brothers in the needle trades, the textile industry and the home workers, the ones who put together all that high-priced Gucci clothing that Hilary Weston sells for outrageous, rip-off prices over at Holt Renfrew. None of these people are ever going to match Hilary Weston's couture standards. They're too darned busy working. And do you know what? There's that doorman at Holt Renfrew. I'm not sure, but I've got a feeling that the people would be told, "No, workers enter through the back," should they even try going to Holt Renfrew over on Bloor Street.

1930

At Holt Renfrew you see those big Mercedes S500s and S600s—Liberal friend fat cats and Tory friend fat cats—parked out in front with the motors running, parked in a no-parking zone. But when you've got a Mercedes—every time I see one of those Mercedes S500s or S600s, I say, "There's another person who's still not paying enough income tax, there's another person who got that huge tax cut from the Tories and hasn't returned a penny of it and, now that the Liberals have been elected, indeed enjoys yet more preferential treatment as a result of the Liberal government's so-called health tax premium, which leaves the very rich alone and punishes, hammers away at, low-income and middle-income folks, including retirees."

I ran into an old friend the other day, a retired police officer who has been retired for 18 years now. He still works, because a little extra money helps. He, as a retiree, as a pensioner with an 18-year-old pension—you know what that means, don't you? That pension is being paid in—

Mr Ouellette: In 1976—

Mr Kormos: In 1976 dollars—a big difference between 1976 dollars and 2004 dollars, ain't there, Mr Ouellette?

Mr Prue: In 1986 dollars.

Mr Kormos: In 1986 dollars. Thank you. He's working, but he's still getting whacked, hammered with the health tax. He darn near swallowed his bubble gum when he opened up the first paycheque after the health tax kicked in. "By God," he says, "I'm a pensioner. I'm working to supplement my income with a few extra bucks." It's not a high-wage job he's working at. Please understand that.

I know there's nothing in Bill 105 that's going to be of any solace—not a page. You go through any one of those pages. There's page after page after page; it's a long bill. There's not a section in Bill 105 that's of any comfort to that old friend of mine from the—well, it wasn't really the Niagara Regional Police Service. He started with the Welland police force back in the old days.

I'm seeing more and more people in my constituency office, and I suspect you are too. I was shocked, saddened, to read the data just the other day that during the helmsmanship of this Liberal government there has been an increase in the dropout rate of high-school students. Good grief, folks. Look, let's put this into perspective. I'm old enough, and so are some of you in this room with me, to recall when, let's say, a grade 10 diploma was a passage point. If you had a grade 10 diploma, and this was quite a few years ago now, you were considered sufficiently well educated to go out and get a job in a factory. It was while I was a young high-school student that that soon was recognized as being dated, and a senior matriculation diploma—grade 12 or 13, whether you were in the four-year or five-year program—was required.

Surely in the year 2004 we've got to understand, because the data reveal this, that unless you're, I don't

know, a rock and roll star or a basketball player or rich because you inherited a lot of your daddy's money, you surely need some post-secondary education or else there aren't going to be too many doors open to you. Even in those workplaces that were traditionally regarded—well, even in industrial workplaces, Lord knows, as a result of free trade; I remember 1988 so well—we continue to see industrial, value-added, manufacturing, high-wage jobs, good jobs, haemorrhaging out of Ontario.

Even in those that are left, the strong back isn't what cuts it any more. Even in the industrial workplace you need some level of post-secondary education, be it at college or university. Quite frankly, college and university students are realizing that that first level of post-secondary education is rarely in and of itself sufficient, that simply to get a bachelor of arts degree is only the beginning, not the end, right? So you've got a bachelor's degree—three years, maybe four—and you've accumulated \$60,000, \$70,000 worth of debt.

Not only are we tragically witnessing an increase in the dropout rate in high school, but I'm witnessing and talking with and spending time with more and more families who come into my constituency office—either at my constituency office or if I meet them over at an event at the Croatian Hall, at an elimination draw at the Lions Club or at Auberge Richelieu down on River Road or if I meet them at the supermarket, the Zehrs down on Niagara Street, or I meet them over at David Chev Olds where I'm getting the oil changed in my truck—David Chev Olds is a unionized workplace. CAW workers are the only ones who will service my vehicles. They do a darned good job too, by the way.

Regardless of where I am, I run into people who are telling me that their kids or grandkids are leaving university after the second or third year because of the shock of having accumulated \$20,000 or \$30,000 worth of debt and the despair of realizing that even when you get that bachelor's degree, you're still talking about at least one more degree—a bachelor of education degree, maybe a master's degree. And if you get a master's, if you're going to do academic work, a PhD or a law degree or an engineering degree or an MBA—MBA tuitions are \$20,000-plus a year. That's tuition only. Law school, University of Toronto, you're talking about an annual sticker price of well in excess of 10 grand a year.

Just as it's a crime to not let new Canadians use all of their skills, talents and training, it's a crime to not let young Ontarians with the zeal, ambition, drive and talent pursue those educational programs and acquire those degrees that will allow them to do great things in the province of Ontario.

As we increasingly restore university campuses as a bastion for the children of but the very rich, we not only deny to those young people who don't come from the families of the very rich those opportunities, we deny ourselves the contribution they can make. We short-change ourselves as a society, as a community, as a province—yes, as a country. There's nothing in Bill 105 that provides any relief, any respite for students or their families. There's nothing.

We've heard from student groups; so have you. Although the preliminary data is based on things like postal codes, they've started to see marked changes in students going into university and post-secondary school from the lower-income areas of communities and lower-income parts of the province.

I find this particularly tragic. I've said this before, but I'll say it again. When I was growing up, it was the 1960s and we had the democratization of education, the Hall-Dennis report, the growth of community colleges, building universities outside of the Ivy League towns, in places like Brock and Trent and so on. I was in the first generation—and I suspect you too, because I think we're just about the same generation, the same age—of young Canadians, in my case, the child of immigrant working-class parents, an immigrant industrial father, who got to go to college and university. We're the first generation. My fear, as I travel around this province and visit college and university campuses, is that the young people from similar working-class and immigrant families who are there now could be the last generation as we continue to witness the elitization of post-secondary education. There's nothing in Bill 105 to address that.

1940

I've got to tell you, yesterday I was down at the Sheraton hotel and I discovered that the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario was having their annual convention. I'm going down the escalator to the convention floor, and I'm recognizing people. Then I see: I realize it's the insurance brokers' association. People are saying, "Hi," and I'm saying, "Howdy. Howdy," and I realize that these are the insurance brokers, with whom I had so many meetings over the course of so many years.

Who do I run into but Lee Romanov? Now, you'll know Lee Romanov. She is the very talented young woman who operates the Web site that you can access to have insurance rates with all the auto insurers in Ontario. You can get them in one fell swoop. I think you pay a modest, \$8 fee. It's www.insurancehotline.com. You go on that and put in your data—your name, your age, the make of car you've got, any convictions—and the computer will just whirl around a little bit and you'll have every insurance company in Ontario and their rate.

One of the things that she discovered is that the rates vary 100%, 200% from one to the other. The other thing that Lee Romanov's discovered, if you go to her Web site—www.insurancehotline.com—you'll find that one letter change in a postal code can result in a 100% change in a premium. Pretty wacky, isn't it, Mr Baird?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Unbelievable.

Mr Kormos: So Ms Romanov is involved in one of the displays in the display area of the convention. I can't get in because I don't have credentials, and security would be all over me like—I know the phrase; it's a simile, but I'm not going to—you know the phrase. They'd be all over me. So she takes me in the back door. We've got all these insurance companies in there now. This is like their perception of the fox in the henhouse.

But we survived and had a chance to say hello to a whole lot of brokers, many of whom took the opportunity to bend my ear about how mean, vicious, deep-pocketed and short-armed the insurance industry—the private for-profit insurance industry—in this province is increasingly becoming, not just in the auto sector but in the home sector, and you know that too. One of the things—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Look, we know that home insurance is not statutorily required. Therefore, what happens—

Mr Baird: If you've got a mortgage, it does, so it means if you're middle class, you do.

Mr Kormos: No. Therefore, what happens is that homeowners who make a claim get their insurance coverage denied. I am fearful.

We've to do some work on the residents of Peterborough. We've asked the Insurance Bureau of Canada to tell us how many policies were cancelled after the last flood—not the most recent, but the one prior to that—and that left how many people uninsured for this most recent round of flooding and how many policies are going to be cancelled as a result of bona fide, legitimate claims made during the most recent flooding in Peterborough. There is not only a crisis of affordability and availability of car insurance in this province, but there is a crisis—not imminent, but a crisis—in affordability and availability of home insurance coverage.

Mr Baird: Killing mortgages; killing dreams.

Mr Kormos: My seatmate here tells me about his concern, even as a Conservative person, for the voracious, rip-off insurance companies.

I'm surprised that Conrad Black never owned an insurance company; I really am. Conrad Black is closer to going to jail than ever before. Isn't that delightful? Some people got mad at me when I made jokes about John Roth and Conrad Black sharing a cell. I remember. It was before the summer break. I made a joke about that, and people were, "Oh, you can't say that," except it's closer to reality than ever before: John Roth from Nortel and Conrad Black sharing a cell, and maybe Barbara can bunk up with Martha. These guys—have you read the stuff out of Hollinger? They stole more money from more people than any outlaw biker gang ever did. Tony Soprano looks like a piker compared to these guys. It is the height of selfishness. These people don't deserve—jail would be too good for them.

I know there's nothing in Bill 105 that protects little investors, people like our folks or our grandfolks who buy mutual funds. Who protects them from the cowardly, despicable thievery of scum like Conrad Black—fat, tubby Black, as we used to mock him—and his pretentious, pompous wife, Barbara? But there should be. There certainly should be. My God, I am far more frightened of Conrad Black and his ilk than I am of any pit bull, and I take the pit bull threat seriously. I'm far more frightened of Conrad Black and his ilk, and throw in John Roth from Nortel and his vice-president, who's building that multi-million-dollar home down on the Oakville beachfront. What bags of dirt; the whole gang of them are.

We need legislation that shuts down criminal elements like them, criminal elements like Conrad Black, John Roth and their ilk. We need an anti-crime agenda that takes on the big criminals, not some kids selling pot in the pool hall.

I regret that my time is up. This hour has gone by quickly, and my colleagues Mr Prue and Ms Horwath will be pleased to join in this debate, as will Mr Bisson and others, as the evening progresses.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Prue: It is indeed a privilege. I was on my way home when I heard that my colleague from Niagara Centre was going to be speaking, and I rushed back because I wanted to hear every word, every dulcet tone, everything that he was going to say. As always, he inspires me with his eloquence. He inspires me the way he can go from topic to topic and sometimes never really deal with the issue at hand.

Having said that, he touched on all the important issues of today. He touched on the plight of the workers out at the Hilton hotel. He touched on all the scams of the rich and the very rich who have made their money, perhaps in ways that some of us would not wish to make our money.

He touched on the problems of the chicken pluckers and the chicken pickers. I had no idea that it was such a hazardous vocation, although I guess I should by looking at the news and seeing all of the people with the avian flu and the people chasing chickens around in Thailand. It looks like a pretty dangerous job there, anyway.

I am glad that I rushed back. I am glad that I listened to my colleague and everything that he had to say, and I hope the members opposite did; I hope it helps them to reflect on the vagaries of this particular bill. When I looked at this particular bill, I have to tell you, the conjunctions of the French verbs that were being changed were somewhat difficult for me to comprehend. Some of the other things contained in the bill—the uses of words. I must admit, with my limited French vocabulary it was very difficult to tell the difference between one side and another and what was there. So I'm very glad to have had an opportunity to listen to the member from Niagara Centre, and he surely has been lucid on these very points.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I too am glad to be here tonight to listen to my colleague Peter Kormos. As everyone who is at home watching and everyone here in the chamber tonight knows, Peter's quite well versed in many, many different areas, having spent such a long time dedicated to his work here in the Legislature on behalf of his constituents in the riding of Niagara Centre.

I was shaking my head vigorously on many of the points that he made. A lot of the people he described in terms of the low-wage workers in this province are people who live and work in the riding of Hamilton East, which I represent. I'm pleased that Peter, as our critic for labour, is able to articulate so clearly the issues that face workers in our cities and towns across Ontario. I think he did a great job of doing that tonight. I know that he is passionate about these issues and concerned about

moving the agenda back to a place where workers have more rights in this province.

1950

Mr Baird: What did you think of his comments on the bill?

Ms Horwath: I think his comments on the bill were very lucid, as a matter of fact, as well.

Mr Baird: What bill is this? Do you know?

Ms Horwath: Bill 105 is quite an interesting piece of legislation because it really does a lot of work around interpretation of language, particularly French to English and English to French. Although my colleague Mr Baird here thinks we don't know about this bill, we certainly do. But we also use these opportunities to speak to the people of Ontario, to let them know that their concerns truly are on our minds, and that's certainly what Mr Kormos has done tonight. He has indicated quite clearly that there are many, many issues that this government can be looking at and can be passing through on these evening sittings, instead of these kinds of bills that really don't have too much effect except to do some house-cleaning.

The Acting Speaker: No further questions and comments? Reply from the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I'm overwhelmed by the fact that the people who are here in the chamber are mute in response to my comments. I know I made reference to Lee Romanov, and I don't know whether I told you her Web site: www.insurancehotline.com. What www.insurancehotline.com will do for you is allow you to compare insurance premiums from all 100-plus automobile insurers in Ontario. So you get on that Web site and you learn a tremendous amount about car insurance, because inevitably, if you're watching, if you're listening, you're being ripped off on your car insurance premiums—you know that.

Our colleague Mr Bisson had to park his car—he did—because he couldn't afford the premiums. And so many others—and I don't counsel this by any stretch of the imagination—are driving without insurance in increasing numbers—they are. That constitutes a serious hazard, because if you're in a motor vehicle that is uninsured, you've got a problem. If there is, for instance, an accident and you suffer serious injuries, you could find yourself without any claim whatsoever, because there's no insurance coverage—there's no company. So I encourage people: www.insurancehotline.com, Lee Romanov's Web site. It's a modest fee; she'll hook you up with the cheapest insurance available and with the brokers who will handle your particular class of driver or automobile owner.

This is a stop-gap measure, because the real solution is public, non-profit, driver-owned automobile insurance where we can have affordable rates, fair rates and fairness for innocent accident victims, just like folks in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia do—public auto insurance.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Prue: It is always a very hard act to follow the member for Niagara Centre. He speaks so eloquently.

I'm going to try and change the tables just a little bit here and actually talk about Bill 105. It is a very difficult bill to talk about, I must tell you, because in order for one to adequately give service to the arcanities of this bill, to actually look at the changes of words and sentence and verb structures in the French language and how they were not adequately translated—through no fault of the translators in the past—and to use better words is quite a skill. I think that this is probably a good bill and in the end most of the members of this Legislature will end up supporting it.

We have a duty to those people whose first language is French to make sure the words that are used in this Legislature, the speeches that are made and, more importantly, the bills that are passed, the laws that are out there extant are properly translated into language so that they can be clear, they can be interpreted, judges can look at them, courts can understand them, lawyers can argue over them, and that if they need to be changed, the changes in time can be made.

It is a difficult job being a translator. I marvel on occasion, when I put this little microphone in my ear—when someone is speaking French or English and I want to try to pick up a few words and how it is translated—how fast the workers in this place are, how accurate they are, how correct they are in everything they do. I'm sure if I were to put this in my ear now and listen to what I'm saying, the worker in that box over there would be translating everything perfectly, in cadence and in every way, so that the people out there who are watching can listen and can understand, in their own language, what is being said here.

C'est vraiment difficile de parler le français entre l'anglais en quelques secondes, comme le monsieur doit faire dans sa profession.

It is very difficult for me—I hope you translated my French and I hope it was as good as my English. I want to tell you that I have been amazed not only in this Legislature but in virtually all the places in Canada that I have worked, where people can take a profession like this and can work so diligently and so carefully to translate word by word.

As you might know, for many years I worked in the immigration department and had an opportunity to watch professional translators translate in often very difficult circumstances, with people who were in distress, with people who were in courtroom situations, with people who were new to the country or were seeking admission to the country. I saw many professional translators literally take words and sentences, build them and give meaning to them in some of the most difficult of circumstances.

I do know how difficult that is to do. One night at Pearson airport I was called upon to do what was called a "further examination" of someone coming in from the United States who spoke French. I was the only person on the staff who spoke any French at all. As you can tell from my rather rudimentary accent, it was not my first language.

Mr Baird: Speak French now.

Mr Prue: I did already. I'll do some more for you in a minute.

It was very difficult, because I had to explain Canadian immigration law, the Immigration Act and what the provisions were, and translate for him during what was called a further examination. At the end of that further examination, I vowed that I would probably never do that again. I'm not sure I gave justice to that poor man, whose first language was French, in explaining all his rights under the Immigration Act or all the consequences of the actions that might take place there.

I hold the translators in the highest of regard. That's why I felt it necessary to speak to this bill. This bill is changing words. It's very difficult for a layperson to actually look at words because words can have several meanings. One can get out a thesaurus and see there are probably 50 words for "speed" or 25 words for the colour yellow. You get out the thesaurus and you look. That's the difficulty, I think, that interpreters have, especially when the job is done rapidly, as sometimes bills are done rapidly in this Legislature and as sometimes policy pronouncements are made.

All of us serve on committees. I went through a couple of committees myself in the last few weeks. One of them was estimates, and before that I was on the committee that was looking at the Ontario Securities Commission. When we made our 14 recommendations for the Ontario Securities Commission, we had to make them in fairly fast order because they had to be translated. The interpreters had literally one day, from the time we made those changes to the Ontario Securities Commission, in language that was very difficult and even difficult for me, in English, to understand because it was all the minutiae of business. It was very difficult. They had one day to translate all of that into a package that would be printed and sent out across Ontario, and perhaps across Canada, so people could understand the legislative changes that were being recommended by the committee. I have to tell you, it is very difficult.

I understand why we have a bill like this here in front of us tonight. We have that bill because, over time, because of the speed, because of the difficulty of language, words have to be changed. We are here to change those words so that in the future, again going back to the lawyers and the judges, they will be able to judge them, they will be able to know what they are and, if they are in error, will be able to change them.

2000

We do not have the luxury of federal legislation. The Official Languages Act sets out the language of Parliament. It may surprise people in Ontario, and particularly in Toronto, that the Official Languages Act sets out that where there is a conflict between the English law and the French law, the French law or the French wording will predominate.

There is a very good reason for that. That is because the French vocabulary, the French wording, is far more perfect. It's far more perfect and precise in how it is

developed and how it is written. One needs to learn the tenses and the verbiage of the French language and look into the perfect and pluperfect tenses and all of those things to see precisely how it is structured to know that it is a far more complex and, I would think because of that, a far more judicially useful language than English. That is why in Canada the French language predominates.

Here, unfortunately, I think that is probably not the case in terms of what we do in this very Legislature. It is not the case. As a result, we have many policies and many laws that are not as accurate as they could and should be. We need to look at what is in this bill here tonight. We need all of us, if we are capable of speaking any French at all, to look at the bill and to determine whether or not the recommendations that are being proposed are correct.

I would assume that they are correct. I want to tell you, my French is not good enough to tell you the past perfect from the pluperfect. I can't tell you the legal interpretations of some tenses of verbs which are used only in the most formal of settings, but our interpreters can do that, and our interpreters need to do that. We need to be mindful of that very problem.

I go back, again, to my time in immigration. It was a time in my youth when there were a lot of things going on and a lot of very different languages and people interpreting those languages. The language of the courtroom and the vernacular of the street, of the international public who was travelling, are very different. People's lives can virtually hinge on the meaning of a word or how that word is interpreted, and I have seen mistakes be made. I have seen interpreters who were not capable of doing what they were doing dismissed from court cases. I have seen them be dismissed from inquiries and from further examinations at Pearson International Airport, and justifiably so.

Again, I go back to this: it is a *métier difficile*. It is a difficult occupation. But it is only people who can do this occupation. As good as the finest computers are—you know, I am constantly amazed. I have one of those little computers, and when I travel to Spanish-speaking countries, I take it with me, because as rudimentary as my French is, my Spanish is even more rudimentary.

Mr Baird: ¿Cómo está?

Mr Prue: ¿Cómo está? I've got that too. "Dos cervezas, por favor," I know how to say. The translation is, "Two beers, please." I know a couple of things and how to order "la cuenta, por favor," when I need the bill at the end.

They have little computers today. Have you ever seen those little computers? You punch in in English what you want to say, and then the computer prints back out in Spanish what your question is or what the words you're looking for are. But those are not the same. Even if we had such a computerized system in this Legislature, it would not match the talent of the people in that room, because no computer can capture the nuances of a language.

No computer can tell you the difference between verbs and verb structures. No computer can list all the various

differences that can be in a simple word, and no computer can act as a thesaurus with a brain. That's why I think we need to commend the people who do this. We need to understand that they are providing a service, and we need to understand that we cannot do this without them. We rely on them. The people of Ontario, particularly those whose first language is French or those who rely on the written word in both languages, need to know that the law is sound.

I was quite impressed, a couple of days ago, in the city of Toronto to see that a left-turn ticket was overturned. I believe when I looked at the news, it was just down the street here at Bay and Elm streets. That's the illegal left-hand turn, and I have seen that many times when I have driven the member for Timmins-James Bay home after these debates late at night. He lives very close to there. You can make a left turn at that time of the night, but you can't during the day, and when I have driven him home after the 6 o'clock meetings on occasion, I have had to be very careful not to make that left-hand turn. But this is, I guess, some of the beauty of this country, that we as Canadians can demand that the service be in either official language, in French or in English, and that the signs must convey, as the legislation must convey, the exact accuracy so that people can understand the rights and privileges it takes to be a Canadian citizen.

Those rights and privileges can only be met if we pass this particular bill. This bill will help those people to understand what this Legislature has intended to do, not just today but over the last period of time when some of the bills that came forward were flawed in that the translations of them were not up to the standard that we have come to expect in Ontario and in Canada.

Perhaps what we should be striving to do is to have people qui peuvent parler le français mieux que moi, who understand how the language structures are developed. I think the only way that is likely to happen is if we start to educate our younger people in both official languages. I would like to see a day, quite frankly, when all Canadian children are able to speak fluently both languages by the time they're finished public school, because that is the only way we are going to get around the difficulties of me trying to express myself in this Legislature adequately in French and those who live in parts of Ontario where French is the spoken word understanding everything that is being said here in Toronto. We live in a very small world. We live in a world which is constantly shrinking, and we as Canadians have an opportunity to show the world that two languages can coexist side by side, that people can know them and people can use them.

One only needs to go to a place like Belgium or Switzerland or go to countries where there are two or three or four languages—go to India, where there are probably 25 languages, where people can communicate not in one, not in two, but sometimes three or four or five languages—to know that it can be done. If they can do that, I am sure that we in this country can accommodate two languages that have very similar root structures, come from the original Frankish, come from the original

Roman, and have many roots and common phrases from within them. I am standing here tonight to say that this is one very tiny, minuscule but important step along that structure to change the words and to bring life to the laws that people need to understand.

I don't know whether anyone is going to oppose this bill, because I haven't heard anyone speak to it, other than my colleague Mr Kormos. But I feel compelled as a proud Ontarian, as a person who was born in Toronto and who really never had the opportunity to learn much French until I went to university, and then unfortunately never had an opportunity to practise it after I left university until I arrived in this House, where I get to hear it from time to time—I think we need to make sure that this is not the end of the process but the beginning of the process. We need, through this legislation, and people, I hope, watching it, to understand that we have an obligation on behalf of all Canadians to service them in their first language, the language of their birth, the language they feel comfortable using, and this bill will indeed do that.

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Having said that, I wish to digress—and I've only got a couple of minutes left—to say how very proud I have been in this Legislature to hear French spoken from time to time. Certainly, I did not have that opportunity in the city of Toronto or in the borough of East York, hardly ever, to hear French being spoken, although I did hear Greek from time to time in East York. I must tell you, it is probably the second language of East York. But to hear French spoken in this Legislature by the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who often is quite eloquent and stands up in French, the member for Nepean-Carleton and the member for Timmins-James Bay and others who have a greater fluency, of course, than I do—we need to try, all of us, to give great credibility to that.

I do enjoy going from time to time to the APF meetings—not that I can contribute a great deal, because again, as I have explained, I feel a little inadequate in terms of my spoken French, although I can certainly understand it and read it quite well even to this day—but to go there to get greater fluency so that I can understand when people make statements directly. With all respect to the people translating in the booth, I think it is always better to listen to someone and understand them directly than to understand them through an interpreter, because the interpreters, as good as they are, must do it on the fly, must do it very quickly, and the human brain is probably faster in understanding it than in saying back those same words a couple of seconds later. So I would invite the other members of the Legislature, if you have an opportunity and if you have even rudimentary French, to come out to the next meeting of the APF. The last meeting was very poorly attended, was it not, Mr Chair and Mr Vice-Chair? It was very poorly attended. There were only five of us there.

Mr Baird: I didn't hear about it.

Mr Prue: You were not there, and we missed you. There were only five of us there. There were a great many things being discussed about la francophonie

around the world—some of the congresses, some of the elections.

I would hope that members of the Legislature will understand that this is important government relations that we have here in Ontario. There are very few places in the world that have an opportunity to belong to la francophonie, but we in Canada have that option. Ontario has seized that option. Ontario has put forward an opportunity for us to interact and to react with people from around the world whose first language is French. We need to develop that and we need to make sure our members develop that and understand the very powerful and wonderful heritage we have in this country of two official languages. We need to do that, not only for around the world but in order to better understand the people we serve, those people who speak the other official language. Now, there are not many. Less than 1% of the people of Beaches-East York give French as their first language. But I will tell you that in travels to the Ottawa area, to eastern Ontario, to northern Ontario, to Quebec, to New Brunswick, the reverse is true. I am very proud to be able to carry on at least a rudimentary conversation with them, and we can understand and empathize with each other in the language of choice.

I have spoken for 20 minutes. I have tried to give some passion to this debate and actually speak to it. I am asking that all members of the Legislature support this bill for the people who are francophones in Ontario.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to call the question on second reading of this bill, and, should the Legislature pass it, to

order it for third reading, and then that the House be adjourned.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has moved unanimous consent for second reading of Bill 105. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Interjections.

Mr Baird: There's no unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: OK. Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 105. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion carries.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

Orders of the day.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion of adjournment of the House?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2016.

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Monday 25 October 2004

Lundi 25 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Today, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture issued a statement calling on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food to get the BSE money out to Ontario producers immediately. Geri Kamenz, vice-president of the OFA, stated, "We're at a point where we need to ask that the minister direct his staff to develop and deliver the federal/provincial funding immediately.... The time for talk is long past. It is time to put the details and programs in front of people. It is time to pay those people who are due a CAIS payment in short order."

Well, Mr Speaker, I agree it's high time Ontario farmers get the money they deserve. That's why BSE funding was the focus of our opposition motion last week, and that's why many of our members spoke to it. We pointed out that the Alberta government had applications and administrative processes available as soon as the federal money was announced, while the Ontario government was not ready.

The Ontario Farmer reported on October 19 that the first cattle set-aside auction had already been held and that most of the participants were from Alberta, whose program was already up and running. It continued to say that no one in Ontario was able to take part because this province has yet to put in place any application system.

I ask, is this all our farmers are worth to this government? Our farmers are suffering because this government isn't competent with agricultural and rural issues. I stand today to demand that the McGuinty government start treating safety net programs with the importance they deserve and make CAIS money available to the farmers of this province immediately.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It appears as though we don't just have one bully left in the Liberal benches; a mini-bully was sent out last Friday to attack Mayor David Miller and all of city council by sug-

gesting that they are misleading the public when it comes to transportation/TTC funding.

The fact remains, and let's get the facts clear, that Mayor David Miller is standing up for the city of Toronto, which is his job, and is making it very clear to the people of Toronto that the TTC is less well off than it was three years ago under the Tories. Can you believe that? That is a fact. The facts are that even though Toronto has only 21% of the province's population, the TTC carries 61% of all Ontario's public transit riders. The mayor has made it very clear that his position is that it wants ridership to be 90% of the criteria.

The fact remains that this year the TTC is worse off under the Liberals than previously under the Tory government. We can't go on like this in this province. They ran on "Choose change." Well, the change, when it comes to the TTC, is that they're actually less funded than they were under the previous Tories. Shame on them.

NORTH YORK SENIORS CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Willowdale.

Applause.

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): Thank you, colleagues.

It's my pleasure today to congratulate the North York Seniors Centre, located in Willowdale, on its 30th anniversary. This organization, one of the first in Ontario, has been bringing important services to the people of Willowdale since 1974. They started with just a small storefront operation in Cummer Plaza. Now their programs run out of several sites in the riding and more than 7,000 seniors a year participate in the programs.

These people go the extra mile for my constituents. They have a van that will transport seniors to their medical appointments and grocery shopping when they don't have any other way to get there. They run a lunch program that gives seniors who are frail or isolated the chance to get out and talk, visit and communicate with their friends. They'll even set you up with a community volunteer who will call on you every day, just to make sure that you're safe, healthy and not in need.

When you're living alone in circumstances like this and concerned about the risk of a sudden health problem or even about a crime, that extra support network can

mean the difference between remaining independent and having to move out of your home.

Many of these programs would not be possible without the centre's 250 volunteers. I think it speaks to the excellence of the organization and the compassion of the people in Willowdale that they support this.

I wish to congratulate the North York Seniors Centre on its 30th anniversary.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Simcoe county and York region remain the only areas in Ontario that do not have a children's treatment centre. There are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs. Approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services, and currently the closest services are in Toronto.

Cindy DeCarlo, as a parent, knows first-hand how critical these services are for children to reach their full potential and fears that many of the existing programs are in jeopardy due to the lack of funding. She says, and I agree, "Why should our children not have the same services as others living anywhere else in Ontario?"

In 2003, the Ministry of Health approved the implementation plan for the children's treatment centre. On September 17, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr Marie Bountrogianni, stated in a letter to me, "I understand the increasing pressures created by local growth in your region, and my ministry is working with the Simcoe York District Health Council to find solutions.... I am impressed with the direction taken in the proposal with respect to coordination and integration. I assure you that we are taking a very serious look at this issue for Simcoe county and York region."

It has already been approved. It's time to act, Minister, and release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in these areas.

VETERANS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I would like to take this opportunity to draw the assembly's attention to what I and members of the Italian-Canadian community regard as a very special occasion today. Today, nearing the close of the month-long ItalCanadaFest, we participated in a Queen's Park memorial service honouring those valiant Canadians who sacrificed their young lives fighting in Italy during the Second World War. This selfless act serves as a unique testament to the irreplaceable bond that still exists between Canada and Italy today

It is morally imperative that we pay tribute to those soldiers who gave their lives fighting for the liberation of Italy. They pursued their duty with the highest commit-

ment to peace and freedom. We can all be proud of the Canadian contingent and the fact that they earned the respect of all Italians.

Therefore, it is with great honour that I offer my eternal thanks to these brave souls whom we honour today. They have bestowed upon us a powerful message that what is good for everyone is to be shared by everyone. Thanks to them, the freedom and peace that we cherish today will be enjoyed by our sons and daughters of tomorrow. We will not forget them. We should all remember them always.

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LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): In February 2004, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario received an application under the Environmental Bill of Rights requesting that the Minister of the Environment review the certificate of approval—the operating permit—for a proposed landfill site in Simcoe county. The planned landfill, also known as site 41, is located near the town of Midland. The proposal involves landfilling on 21 hectares of land within a total site area of 60 hectares.

The applicants have questioned the appropriateness of developing site 41 for main two reasons. First, the applicants noted numerous technical issues raised in 2003 by the Minister of the Environment and several independent technical experts relating to the county's proposed detailed design and operational parameters of the landfill. Second, because of impending changes to Ontario's law and policy related to source water protection, the applicants question whether it is prudent to consider the landfill's development. MOE declined to undertake the review. The ECO disagrees with that decision.

In denying the application, the MOE told the applicants that a review of the C of A was already underway and that undertaking the review would create a duplicate exercise. MOE's narrow view is unfortunate. The ministry's consideration of the landfill design and operation focuses on specific technical factors. As well, MOE's intention to review the C of A in light of existing policies, acts and regulations does not address the applicants' request that the MOE broadly consider the merit of developing site 41 in light of the impending changes to Ontario's regulatory framework on source protection. The approach to source protection being considered by the MOE was not part of the ministry's approach to watershed management in the mid-1990s, when the hearing board issued its approval for site 41, or in 1998, when the C of A was issued. Thus, the broader review requested by the applicants would not constitute a duplicate exercise.

The ECO believes that a broad review of site 41 was warranted to increase government accountability for environmental decision-making on this highly contentious proposal. It would have been appropriate for the Ministry of the Environment to evaluate the C of A in

light of the province's intention to strengthen source water protection requirements.

WILLIAM OSLER HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today the proudest I've ever been since being elected the member for Brampton Centre. My constituents sent me here with an important mission: to ensure the construction of a desperately needed hospital in Brampton and to ensure that the hospital is publicly owned, publicly operated and publicly accountable. I'm proud to say that the day has finally come when I can finally announce to the people of Brampton: Mission accomplished.

Premier McGuinty made a commitment to me that he would move heaven and earth to build this hospital. This past Friday, one year less a day since our government was sworn into office, construction began on the site of the new William Osler Health Centre.

On the day that Minister George Smitherman was sworn into office, he and I spoke about the need for a new hospital. On that day, the minister's words gave me hope that our hospital would finally move forward. Over the past year, the minister has worked tirelessly to ensure that my community received its hospital.

A project of this magnitude presents many challenges, but the hospital board, especially the chair, Bryan Held, and CEO Bob Bell, focused on negotiating an agreement that was in the best interests of the Brampton community. When this hospital opens in 2007, it will be a true testament to what can happen when we all work together toward a common goal.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Friday, October 22, was a great day for the city of Ottawa. Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli and Councillor Janet Stavinga, chair of the city's transportation committee, joined Premier McGuinty and eastern Ontario MPPs in Ottawa to announce the gas tax allocation. This funding will assist Ottawa in further developing its world-class transit system with more buses to serve an increasingly growing city and the possibility of moving forward with plans for an expanded light rail system.

I want to recognize Mayor Chiarelli's contribution to this important initiative. As a former member of Ottawa's city council and transportation committee, I recall the work put into convincing the senior levels of government of the need to put dedicated funds toward improving and extending public transit in our city.

Before and during the consultation process, Mayor Chiarelli led the larger cities in making strong arguments for dedicated transit funding. With strong co-operation from the mayors, the McGuinty government is coming through with that funding—sustainable, long-term funding for municipal transit. Mayor Chiarelli was extremely

pleased with the \$18.9 million allocated to Ottawa for the first year of the gas tax implementation. The gas tax is going to mean great things for Ottawa and municipalities across Ontario: better transit, better air quality, better communities.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I stand here today disgusted with the action of the third party last Thursday. It was inexcusable. The NDP blocked debate on Bill 73, thus preventing the bill to protect children and youth on Ontario's roads from passing second reading. This same party stood in this House for the last eight years in support of my school bus bill and is now playing politics with children's lives.

This weekend, Colleen Marcuzzi wrote to the leaders of all three parties to express her outrage, frustration and disappointment with the behaviour of the NDP. Her letter is dated October 23, and she begins with, "Today if she had lived ... it would be my daughter Ryan's 25th birthday. She was killed eight years ago when a man drove past a school bus that was stopped with the sign out ... the arm on the bus extended ... and the lights flashing. She was running for her bus to go to school and the man hit her."

In her letter, Colleen asks for all members of this House to do the right thing: Allow the passage of Bill 73 for the safety of our children.

On behalf of the Marcuzzi and Loxton families, who both lost daughters to reckless drivers passing a stopped school bus, I'm urging all members of this House to allow the passage of Bill 73 so no other parent will have to live with the nightmare of losing a child because an irresponsible driver refused to obey the law.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12 midnight on Monday, October 25, 2004, Tuesday, October 26, 2004, and Wednesday, October 27, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be counted.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
 Baird, John R.
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Bentley, Christopher
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Brown, Michael A.
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Colle, Mike
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Dunlop, Garfield

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Hoy, Pat
 Hudak, Tim
 Jackson, Cameron
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Brown, Michael A.
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Colle, Mike
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Dunlop, Garfield

Peters, Steve
 Phillips, Gerry
 Papatello, Sandra
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Sandals, Liz
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique
 Smitherman, George
 Sorbara, Greg
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wilkinson, John
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakabuski, John
 Zimmer, David

Brown, Michael A.
 Brownell, Jim
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Colle, Mike
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Dunlop, Garfield

Klees, Frank
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Levac, Dave
 Marsales, Judy
 Martiniuk, Gerry
 McMeekin, Ted
 McNeely, Phil
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Miller, Norm
 O'Toole, John
 Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Parsons, Ernie

Smitherman, George
 Sorbara, Greg
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wilkinson, John
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakabuski, John
 Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Churley, Marilyn
 Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter

Martel, Shelley

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Churley, Marilyn
 Hampton, Howard

Kormos, Peter
 Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 62; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ACTIVE2010

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I rise today to inform members about Active2010, a new initiative designed to get more Ontarians physically active and healthy.

Right now, less than half of all Ontarians are physically active on a regular basis. That is not a healthy situation.

The goal of Active2010 is to increase Ontario's sport participation and physical activity so that by the year 2010 at least 55% of Ontarians are physically active.

Ontario's sport and recreation system has suffered from years of neglect and underfunding. This government recognizes the importance of investing in sport and recreation, which is why we are committing an additional \$5 million a year to amateur sport and physical activity through the Active2010 strategy.

Nearly six million Ontarians over the age of 12 are not active enough to maintain good health. Active2010 starts with youth. To appeal to kids 10 to 14 years old, we are launching a campaign in November called Pause to Play. Pause to Play's transit ads, school posters and Web site will encourage kids to put their video games on pause and instead have fun playing and being active.

It's not just the youth of our province who need to get more active; 57% of Canadian adults do not do the suggested daily minimum amount of activity—just 30 minutes a day. In the spring, we will be launching an adult walking campaign to encourage older adults to get off the sofa, turn off the TV and go out for a brisk walk instead.

In addition to encouraging individual Ontarians to become more active, we will make it easier for them to

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
 Baird, John R.
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Bentley, Christopher
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hardeman, Ernie
 Hoy, Pat
 Hudak, Tim
 Jackson, Cameron
 Jeffrey, Linda

Peters, Steve
 Phillips, Gerry
 Papatello, Sandra
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Sandals, Liz
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique

follow this advice. The second prong of the Active2010 initiative is to increase the amount of direct funding to provincial sport organizations by \$1.5 million, for a total of \$7.2 million a year.

This, I remind members of the House, is the first funding boost for these sport organizations in eight years. This money will help train new and existing sport leadership at the community level and increase participation levels. It will allow sport and recreation groups to better serve the needs of their communities.

All Ontarians should have equal access to sport and recreation activities, regardless of their age, ability or income level. Through Active2010, we will work to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating.

The third thrust of Active2010 will create supportive environments for sport participation that address the needs of low-income children, people with disabilities and underserved populations such as ethnic communities, women, aboriginals and older adults.

Finally, a new multi-year \$5.2-million communities in action fund will provide increased support for community physical activity planning and local sport projects. This will increase opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

This morning, the Premier announced the first communities in action grant: \$125,000 to help Variety Village provide special gym classes to 600 disabled students attending schools in the GTA.

Our \$5-million Active2010 commitment today boosts total funding to the sport and recreation sector to \$20 million a year. Active2010 will be a catalyst for real, positive change in the way we live.

Not everyone makes it to the podium for a medal, but everyone deserves the chance to play, and every Ontarian who plays is a winner.

1410

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm very pleased to inform the House that I have just returned from Clondeboyne, just north of Lucan, which is north of London, where my colleague Energy Minister Dwight Duncan and myself launched an exciting project that will help to advance green power, support our agri-food industry and build strong rural communities.

We are investing more than \$1.6 million in the creation of an anaerobic digestion facility that converts biogas from manure into heat and electricity. This is innovation at last. With this facility, the Lynn Cattle Co will be able to generate enough electricity to supply its own needs and sell the surplus to the market.

The municipality of North Middlesex has agreed to purchase 2,500 megawatt hours of electricity each year, making it the first green-powered municipality in all of Canada.

Our government is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing cleaner energy options. The technology developed for this project will be useful for producing heat and electricity in an environmentally

sound manner for generations to come. This is good news for all of us.

This project is about more than just electricity and heat. The by-products from the process will be sold as organic fertilizers, manure odours on the farm will be reduced by 80% and the facility will create three full-time jobs.

This is truly a win-win situation for everyone. We are looking to repeat this across Ontario. It demonstrates how the province, along with the federal government, municipal governments, the agriculture industry, the private sector and community partners can work together to create real, positive opportunities and create direct community benefits.

This provincial initiative is being made through the Ontario small town and rural fund—the RED program—which helps fund projects that support sustainable rural communities and community partnerships. To achieve meaningful and lasting benefits, we all must work together, invest together and share risks together.

Rural areas in particular depend on the efforts of a range of players to improve their local communities. The McGuinty government understands the importance of the RED program to rural Ontario. It's just one way that our government is delivering real, positive change to our communities to ensure they are strong, healthy and prosperous—and more importantly, how agriculture can be part of the solution to the many challenges our society faces today.

MOOSE TAGS

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to advise the members that this government is acting on its commitment to provide northern Ontario residents with increased access to moose-hunting opportunities.

Today I am announcing a proposal to add a second adult moose tag draw for hunters who live in northern Ontario. I'm pleased that this proposal would expand hunting opportunities for northerners while ensuring a sustainable moose population.

We know that most moose hunting in the province occurs in the north. We are proposing a second draw because we feel it is only appropriate to provide northern residents with additional access to those northern hunting opportunities.

Every year, about 100,000 resident hunters from across the province apply for approximately 16,000 adult moose tags. To make sure that Ontario's moose populations are managed sustainably, the ministry adjusts tag numbers annually to reflect estimated changes in herd size and hunter harvest.

Under the proposal I'm putting forward today, the Ministry of Natural Resources would hold back 5% of the adult moose tags available in the wildlife management units north of the French and Mattawa rivers. These tags will be used as a quota for the second draw.

Only northern residents who were unsuccessful in the adult moose tag draws in the previous two years would

be eligible for the second draw. This proposal will be posted today on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for 30 days for public comment. The proposed changes would apply to the 2005 moose-hunting season.

I'm pleased to take this step today toward meeting the government's commitment to support additional adult moose-hunting opportunities for northern Ontario residents.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a quick response to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I thank him for the announcement. Indeed, it is good news for the agricultural community and the farmers of Ontario.

I was a little surprised when the minister, in his statement, had this as "innovation at last." I just want to point out to the minister that that may not be quite accurate and he may want to change that.

I just want to point out, first of all, that he also was very complimentary about the RED program, and indeed I agree with him. I had the pleasure of being the minister when that program was put in place, and I want to commend the minister opposite for being able to convince his cabinet that that was one of the programs that definitely should be left in place, because it does indeed help rural Ontario.

I have here a news release. It says, "Eves Government Invests in Innovative Biogas Cogeneration Initiative in Cambridge." This is dated February 28, 2003. If one wants to read through that, he will find that the announcement is quite similar and the process is identical to what the minister announced today. So I don't think this is innovation at last; it's another innovative project.

I want to thank the farmers who were involved with the program last year, the Law family and the Culham family. I want to congratulate them on what they've done.

Last but not least, I want to talk about accuracy. The minister has put out a news release today that says that the Canada-Ontario set-aside program is now available. That is, again, good news for Ontario's farmers. But then it says, "Application forms will be available in OMAF resources centres across the province and on the ministry's Web site the week of November 1." So they are not available now. I think the people of Ontario should know that this is a news announcement that he will be able to make again two weeks from now, because it is not ready, as he suggests it is.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's truly a sad day for Ontario's moose hunters. You see, although the minister states that there are about 100,000 moose hunters in the province, what he fails to state is that a majority of them are in southern Ontario. As a matter of fact, there are probably more moose tags allocated or more moose hunters in the GTA alone than there are in

all of the north. What about those people from Cornwall? What about those people from St Catharines or Ottawa? Southern Ontario moose hunters were punished earlier on through the year with a calf tag draw when there were clearly other options available that would have achieved the same results. What about the Powley case, which removed hundreds of tags from Ontario's non-Metis residents? Now an additional 5% are being removed from southern Ontario residents.

The tourism industry alone had strong concerns about this, as those groups from southern Ontario normally stayed in tourist camps in the north. How is that going to be affected, and are they going to be compensated?

What's next: southern Ontario resident deer tags, southern Ontario turkey tags only, southern Ontario pheasant or quail tags? And what about those cottage owners who want controls on their lakes? Shouldn't we be giving them special rights as well?

No, this is a bad day for Ontario's moose hunters. What we are creating is an "us against them"—north against south—not only in the moose industry but also in the tourism industry.

ACTIVE2010

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation's announcement about Active2010, which has to do with promoting physical activity. Certainly I would not argue with the goal of increasing physical activity. In fact, I know I am in the target group for the 45- to 65-year-old age group.

I would question the priorities of this government. I would also wonder whether this \$5 million a year is the health tax at work. We know that the health tax is going to fix sewers in downtown Toronto, so I assume this is probably some more work of the health tax, or is this just a Liberal slush fund? In the press release, Active2010 is to improve awareness of the benefits of physical activity, to motivate people to get active. So if they're watching TV, they're going to see a TV ad telling them they really should get off the couch and do something. It does look a little bit like this is a \$5-million slush fund to go to Liberal-friendly companies and spend some more on advertising. Ontario's version of Adscam is perhaps what we have here.

What about other parties? You could have spent \$1.3 million and kept the Leslie M. Frost Centre open. That would have been a really good use for the money. Or there are some excellent soccer clubs around that you could invest money in, which would be money very well spent, like the Bracebridge minor soccer club.

1420

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's really good to see that the Minister of Tourism is always exuberant and very excited with the announcements that he makes. I can understand why he tries to beef it up by making it appear like these sums are extraordinary sums that we have never, ever seen before. I understand. I hope you won't be too, too surprised to find that this oppo-

sition member won't be jumping for joy with this announcement.

There are a couple of issues. First of all, I remind people that Dalton McGuinty says, "I am Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Every penny. Page 44: We find that the Minister of Tourism and Recreation has a program called Active2010, which promotes "increased participation in sports and physical activity, particularly for children, youth and low-income individuals." While I understand the Premier and his ministers want to stretch it out and make health connect to everything imaginable, this money should be coming from a different pot, not from unfairly taxing a whole lot of Ontarians who can't afford to pay that premium.

Second, while you're at it, Minister, you should just nudge Gerard Kennedy over there and say, "Gerard, we've got to do something about gym classes, because a lot of kids are not running. They don't have any gym in those classes, and you and I have got to work together to make sure those kids are going to get physically active." So with a little nudge to Gerard Kennedy, get him to think about it a little bit.

I want to say this to you: There are a whole lot of people working at two or three jobs at a time, working at minimum wage, and that paltry sum, the cents that you guys gave to increase the minimum wage, isn't going to help very much. A whole lot of people are depending on a whole lot more money not only to buy healthy foods but to find the time to walk. They do not have the money or the time to walk, because what you're giving them by way of your paltry minimum wage does not allow them to go out there and walk. They've got to work two or three jobs at a time. So think in terms of increasing the minimum wage and a little nudge to Gerard Kennedy to get him to look at the curriculum and make sure the kids are actually physically active. If you can deal with some of these things then maybe I'll jump with joy at your announcement.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Agriculture today. I want to say: My, my, this is another very modest announcement. We heard a few weeks ago from a member of Parliament from Germany, an expert in alternative energy, who came here to Ontario and said he was embarrassed by the low level of commitment of this provincial government to alternative energy sources. What do we have here? A mere \$1.6 million is the commitment of this government. Yes, you try to dress it up by saying that the municipality of North Middlesex has agreed to purchase 2,500 megawatt hours of electricity each year, trying to make that sound as if it's some huge amount. I doubt that we'll even see anything near that amount produced, but we'll wait and see.

I would just say to the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Agriculture: This is yet again evidence of

your very weak, incredibly weak dedication to alternative energy sources.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to deal with the Minister of Natural Resources and his scheme to create two tiers of hunters in Ontario. I just say to the minister: I look forward to the details. I invite you to go to Hamilton, Oshawa, Peterborough, Windsor and Cornwall and conduct public consultations on this issue because, let me tell you, creating two tiers of hunters in Ontario is going to create controversy that you don't want to see.

In fact, I'll make a prediction: Within seven or eight months we'll see the Minister of Natural Resources scurrying around Ontario to find his own digester so that he can somehow modify or back away from this proposal, because this will create problems for the tourism industry, it'll create problems with the Federation of Anglers and Hunters and it will create untold problems with the moose draw. I look forward to the public consultations on this issue.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): In the west gallery we have a former parliamentarian, our colleague Al Leach of the 36th Parliament, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Welcome.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On your slight indulgence, I have a surprise visitor, a former councillor from the city of Edmonton, my uncle, Father Edward Kennedy. He is in the government gallery here.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Simply falling in line with the tone that's been set, I want to introduce Zuzana Jurova, visiting from Kosice, Slovakia.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Is this again a point of order that is not a point of order?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Yes. I'd like to introduce to you, from the government of Cuba's Department of International Relations, Georgina Chabau Montalvo. She's on the right-hand side here.

The Speaker: Is there any other point of order that is not a point of order? Today will be the last day we do that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Acting Premier, who I believe is

the Minister of Finance today, related to the furor and concern with respect to the health care premium, as he has described it himself, and who indeed is going to pay for it. Apparently, these guys can't even raise taxes without creating a mess. That seems to be what's happening in this situation.

We have an arbitrator's ruling, in terms of a long-term-care facility, which indicates that despite the assurances of the Minister of Finance to a number of my colleagues earlier this year that this tax would not be applied to employers, the arbitrator's decision is quite the opposite. We would like an explanation from the Minister of Finance today with respect to the conclusion of the arbitrator and what the impact might be across the province.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm sure my friend is referring to an arbitrator's decision that was made public, I think, three or four weeks ago. I've read the decision. I don't agree with its approach. My friend may also be aware of another decision involving the employees of Air Canada Jazz, which took a completely opposite point of view on the premium. So arbitrators will, for a while, have their views discussed publicly.

My views have been made very clear and very direct: The Ontario health premium is an individual tax levied under the income tax system of the province and the country, and it remains a personal obligation of individuals who fall within the taxable categories.

Mr Runciman: The minister gets up and repeats the same mantra that we heard in the spring, despite the ruling. And he refers to Air Canada Jazz. We don't know the rationale with respect to that—the wording. As mentioned, it's a federal carrier.

The minister indicated, in his earlier comments this spring with respect to the variety of clauses within a number of collective agreements, that there may be differences. We don't know, with respect to this particular collective agreement, the similarity, the comparability, in terms of other public service unions across the province. We know that community college teachers—approximately 15,000 covered—would have enormous implications; a third of the school boards in this province; the hospital sector, which we are very, very much concerned about, given the cuts being imposed by your government with respect to funding increases this year.

We want to know from the minister, rather than the company line, if you will, that we've heard for months now: Based on this arbitrator's decision, have you truly looked at the impact with respect to this ruling being upheld by the courts? What are the impacts going to be to taxpayers in this province?

1430

Hon Mr Sorbara: I will once again try to make it perfectly clear to my friend opposite that the Ontario health premium represents a tax levied under the province's income tax system. He picked up my reference to the Air Canada Jazz case and there was an interjection from one of his friends that that's a federal case. It was not a federal case; it was looking at the very same question. I

just invite my friend to relax, to take it easy. There will be in each of these cases a judicial review of the arbitrator's decision, which is natural.

I want to once again tell my friend that the Ontario health premium is a tax under the Income Tax Act, and it is an obligation of individuals who fall within the taxable categories.

Mr Runciman: We would like to know who is going to conduct that review. In some respects, it looks like this is a train they didn't see coming, which happens in so many instances with this government in terms of preparation and raises serious questions regarding competence.

We have to look at the university sector, at the community college sector, at a whole range of public service sectors that could be impacted by this. We are especially concerned with respect to the hospital sector. We know the Minister of Health is bullying the hospital sector with respect to the agreements they have to bring forward in terms of controlling their costs and the impact that is projected to have now on important services to all Ontarians.

Are you guaranteeing us in the House today that not one red cent of this health care tax, health care premium—however you wish to describe it—will be paid for by the hospitals, that it will not impact on health care services in our hospitals? Are you guaranteeing us that today?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend raises a hue and cry based on an arbitrator's decision that was made almost a month ago, after another arbitrator's decision came to exactly the opposite conclusion. What would he like us to do? Would he like us to put in our legislation that a trade union can't possibly raise this argument?

I say to him that I've read the decision. I'm disappointed with the decision. I disagree with the decision. But I think we might just let a court of competent jurisdiction have a look at these decisions to clear the air in this regard.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health. Your hospital underfunding is starting to have devastating consequences in hospitals, big and small, right across Ontario.

I want to bring up the example of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. Their director, Dr Bob Roberts, says that if they don't get the full budget, then waiting lists will have to be extended.

On page 6 of your election platform, you promised shorter waiting times for cardiac care. Can you guarantee people in my community and around Ontario who use this valued provincial institution that waiting lists will not go up by one single case?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very happy to report to the honourable member and to remind him that his party campaigned on having an allocation to Ontario's hospitals, for this year, some \$700 million less than what we've

already allocated. I remind the member that in a year in office we've contributed \$385 million, a further \$469.5 million and we've acknowledged \$721 million in working capital debts that are the left-behind operating bills from that party while in government.

With all of that having been said, we are committed to a wait-time strategy that will see 36,000 additional cardiac procedures by the fiscal year 2007-08. We're building those currently, and I can confirm for the honourable member that this government will ensure that Ontario has increasingly good performance related to cardiac initiatives.

Mr Baird: That is cold comfort to the families struggling on a waiting list at the Ottawa Heart Institute and not an answer from this minister.

I will bring up two other examples. The Campbellford Memorial Hospital will have to close 19 beds and cut the equivalent of 19 jobs. The Northumberland Hills Hospital will have to close 12 of its 25 complex care beds.

On page 8, you said, "We will bring stability to our hospitals by providing adequate [multi-year] funding."

Minister, can you guarantee me that not a single nurse at the Campbellford Memorial Hospital or the Northumberland Hills Hospital will lose their job? Can you guarantee me that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I can guarantee to the honourable member and to all Ontarians is that our party in government is putting \$700 million more into Ontario hospitals than you campaigned on in your Magna budget.

Further, what I can confirm for the honourable member is that the process we've established with the Ontario Hospital Association is one that in some cases, in some hospitals, could take us 18 months to get hospitals in balance. This is what hospitals asked for, and we acceded to those wishes. We are at the beginning stages. There is a seven-step process that has been established. The earliest of those steps very clearly asks Ontario hospitals to focus on those issues that are non-clinical, on those areas which don't affect patient care. That's the stage of this discussion that we're at.

While I know that the honourable member seeks to fast-forward to an end point that he sees as delicious, what we're focused on very clearly is working with hospitals to make sure that every precious penny—every precious penny—available can be focused on patient care.

Mr Baird: Minister, that non-answer is cold comfort to the people concerned about 31 bed losses at Campbellford Memorial and at Northumberland Hills Hospital.

I want to bring up another example. The constituents of my colleague from Burlington are shocked, worried and concerned about the 90 bed closures that you want to ram through at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. That would involve the laying off of 100 people, all of them providing quality patient care to people in Burlington and Halton region.

On page 8 of your election platform, you promised to open 1,600 net new beds in Ontario. Not only are 90 beds being closed at Joseph Brant hospital, but you've already

cancelled some 60 new hospital beds. Minister, would you stand up in your place and commit to providing the necessary funding to Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital so that they will not have to reduce one single nurse or one single bed? Would you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I'm very pleased to do is operate in a fashion that's different from the honourable member's—the honourable member seeks to turn a press release into reality.

We recognize that Joseph Brant is one of those hospitals in the province, particularly as one that has recently had new construction, around which I'll have additional information shortly. Joseph Brant, like all other hospitals in the province that are not in balance—and some 50 or 60 are in balance—is asked to work through a process that has been established with the Ontario Hospital Association. These are the steps we're at, the earliest stages of a seven-step process.

With respect to the honourable member, I think it's important that he be reminded that for two years while his party was the government in Ontario, they actually cut the budgets of hospitals by—get this—\$565 million.

C DIFFICILE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last Thursday, the Public Health Agency of Canada said it will begin tracking the deadly C difficile bacterium in 25 major hospitals across Canada. This extraordinary measure follows the deaths of at least 109 hospital patients from C difficile in Quebec over the past six months.

Studies from the US, the UK and elsewhere here in Canada show that a reduction in the quality of hospital cleaning is directly related to the spread of deadly superbugs such as C difficile. And what are you planning to do? You want to cut the jobs and the wages of our hospital cleaners. Minister, why are you trying to cut the wages, benefits and jobs of the very hospital workers who can best protect our patients from the deadly C difficile bacterium?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do think it's important for the honourable member to recognize that across the province of Ontario there's already a series of different circumstances related to who's involved in cleaning hospitals.

I would say, on the very sensitive and important matter of C difficile, that I believe Ontario has acted very appropriately in the context. As a result of our Operation Health Protection, we've established a provincial infectious disease advisory committee. This is a group of experts who work together, including the OMA and the OHA. We're working very hard to make sure that all that can be learned is applied.

I acknowledge to the honourable member that this is a serious issue in Ontario's hospitals and institutions. We're working with a committee that we've established in the last year, representative of all the groups that you

would want to have input from, to make sure the Ontario plan is the best-established plan in the land.

1440

Mr Hampton: Minister, you don't even require the reporting of the incidence of *C difficile* in Ontario. That's where you're at. You're so wound up about beating up on the lowest-paid hospital workers, and meanwhile you don't even require the reporting.

I just want to read some of the information from Britain: "Britain's National Audit Office revealed that infections in hospitals affect 100,000 people each year, costing the National Health Service approximately £1 billion to treat. More importantly, hospital-acquired infections are primarily responsible for killing 5,000 patients per year and are a substantial factor in 3% or 15,000 deaths per year." And what are you talking about? You're talking about going after the first line of protection our patients have from *C difficile*.

Minister, instead of going after the lowest-paid hospital workers, will you pledge today that you will not attack their collective agreements, you will not try to cut their wages and you will not try to contract out their jobs? Will you put the priority where it deserves to be: protecting our patients by keeping our hospital cleaning staff in place?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm always pleased to get advice on the sanctity of labour agreements from one of the architects of the social contract.

On the issue that the honourable member raises with respect to the reportable nature of *C difficile*, PIDAC, the very committee I referred to in my earlier answer, has this issue currently under consideration. I think it's important for them to come back with advice. In these matters, where the issue is highly scientific, it's prudent on our part to make sure we're involving those people who have expertise in this to provide us with advice. I've established such a committee. They are in the process of providing that advice.

Further, I would say that we're very mindful of the fact, and thankful too, that the federal government's new public health agency has a medical officer of health who is assisting all Canadian jurisdictions in deliberations on this important point.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the question was, will you commit to not going after the jobs and wages of the first line of defence in our hospitals in terms of protecting patients from the *C difficile* bacterium?

Let me give you some other advice. This comes from the United States, where "a Chicago Tribune investigative report alleges that in 2000, an estimated 103,000 patients' deaths were linked to hospital infections and that the causes of 75% of these deadly infections (unsanitary facilities, unwashed hands, and unsanitary instruments) were preventable." They also point out that "hospital cleaning staff," in many cases, "were inadequately trained and that cleaning budgets had been steadily cut—15%-20% each year."

Now what do we hear from you? You want to cut hospital cleaning budgets. You think that the first line of

defence our patients have from these kinds of deadly superbugs is to cut the jobs, the wages and the benefits of hospital cleaning staff. How much evidence do you need to show you that you're wrong? You shouldn't be attacking these workers. Will you pledge that you will not try to cut the wages and jobs, or contract out the jobs, of these workers?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think the honourable member needs to be reminded of the point that in Ontario there is a series of different arrangements, as I said in my first answer, with respect to who cleans those hospitals. In the city of Toronto, some of our largest academic teaching centres are not cleaned by the unionized staff the member speaks about.

I would say to the honourable member that the decision point for us, the distinction point, is not whether someone works in Sid Ryan's union or not. That's not where we draw the line. It is that we want to work with people who are competent, to make sure that they are appropriately trained and that we are dedicating the appropriate commitment to the issue of cleaning. In our view, how they are organized is less an issue than the honourable member would make it. Of course, what we depend upon across the breadth of Ontario's health care system is hard-working people who are dedicated to the challenge of their particular employment. I think it's important to note that some of those are unionized and some are not.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Your government's reaction to Toronto's TTC problems this weekend shows that the health minister isn't the only bully in your government. Last Friday, the mayor of Toronto stood up for the people of his city and pointed out that your recently announced transit scheme will leave the city of Toronto with less money than before; in fact, less money than they had under the Conservatives. Instead of sitting down and discussing this, you unleashed your mini pit bull, member Brad Duguid, to call the mayor of Toronto a liar.

Minister, here's the reality: Toronto will get less money now than it got before this announcement was made. Will you call off your pit bull? Will you sit down with the mayor of Toronto and work out an agreement so that Toronto doesn't lose money on this deal but is able to operate its transit system in the proper way?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I am very proud of the announcement we made about the gas tax. This is the first time ever in Ontario that we are providing stable new funding for transit in Ontario. This funding will help the municipalities to plan ahead, and they can do it without coming to the province every time they need the money. This is new money, this is stable money, it's growing money, and of the \$680 million we will put out, Toronto will get \$355 million, which is 52% of the total money. So we are very, very proud of our announcement.

Mr Hampton: I want to remind the minister of what someone named Dalton McGuinty said. Before the election, Dalton McGuinty promised to stop the fighting between Queen's Park and the municipalities. One year ago, Dalton McGuinty said, "For eight years, instead of leadership from Queen's Park," we've had buck-passing. "Instead of partnership, there has been a patronizing attitude...."

"It's time to start working together. The politics of division ... must stop."

But then I hear the mayor of Toronto pointing out that after this much-ballyhooed transit announcement, Toronto will actually have less money to operate the TTC than it had before. Minister, I don't know what you call it, but I call that a broken promise. The people who operate Toronto transit need help. Will you ensure there is no TTC fare hike this year by guaranteeing that Toronto receives the money that you tried to take away from them with your announcement?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me tell you what I call it. I call it keeping the commitment that we made. I say this is stable funding that we are providing to the municipalities so they can meet their transit needs.

If you don't want to take my word for it, let me read this. Roger Anderson, the chair of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said it is the first time in the history of the province of Ontario that there is a permanent source of revenue from gas tax and they are very pleased to see it. He went on to say that it's a huge step forward for the municipalities. It is the first time ever that the province of Ontario has been part of a revenue-sharing formula with municipalities.

We are very proud of this announcement. Let me tell you, the funding that the city of Toronto will get is more than they have ever seen for transit purposes in this province.

1450

Mr Hampton: Well, Minister, calling the mayor of Toronto a liar is not a good first step, but it's not just the mayor of Toronto.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order

Mr Hampton: The mayor of Kingston says your transit scheme "negates the" McGuinty "election promise to make Ontario municipalities more of an equal partner with Queen's Park." He says, "We're being told exactly how to spend our money ... We have no freedom whatsoever."

The mayor of Brantford is worried that his city will end up with less too. He said, "I'm hoping this money doesn't supersede another program the government has to help us buy buses, because then there'd be no gain."

Minister, instead of trying to conduct war on the mayor of Toronto and the Toronto transit authority, will you meet with the city of Toronto and other municipalities to ensure they can meet their transit needs and avoid fare hikes and cuts to services?

Hon Mr Takhar: I am on the record as saying that we are always prepared to work with the municipalities. I also said that they are great people to work with.

I want to tell you more. Let me tell you what the mayor of London said, because I was there. Said, "That's the kind of sustainable funding we've been waiting for.... Now we can start planning for the future. In the past, we haven't always known who to count on for the revenue and how much we'd get."

So this is sustainable funding, this is long-term funding and it is joint funding. We are very, very proud of this announcement, and we will be prepared and delighted to work with any municipality that chooses to do so.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have another question for the Acting Premier. This is not a politically sexy issue, but it is important. It's a question related to the meetings tomorrow regarding equalization.

We know that if Ontarians are asked, they will always say they're Canadians first and Ontarians second, but there are some limitations to that patriotism if our provincial government is seen to be fast and loose with the interests of the province. Some of you will know that from Mr Peterson's experience with respect to the Charlottetown accord.

Our party leader, Mr Tory, has called for a broad review of federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. Minister, can you advise us what your government's approach will be? How do you plan to balance the interests of Ontario taxpayers, their loyalty to Canada and the bargaining position of other provinces?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I will begin by telling my friend that I very much appreciate the question, because it's a timely topic and an important issue, both for the province of Ontario and for Canadians from coast to coast.

Let me say at the beginning that, as we speak, the Premiers are meeting in Ottawa to prepare for the meeting with the Prime Minister tomorrow. I expect that our Premier, Premier McGuinty, will exercise the same sort of energy, dynamism and commitment that he brought to the first ministers' conference on health care.

In answer directly to his question, our position is simple and straightforward: We believe in equalization in this country. That is part of our Constitution. At the same time, we have to be careful in Ontario that fiscal federalism does not get out of whack such that the taxpayers in the province of Ontario are bearing too large a burden as we try to equate services across the country.

Mr Runciman: I guess what you consider to be too much of a burden is subjective. I'm told that Ontario taxpayers today contribute approximately \$4 billion in equalization payments to other provinces. Some of the receiving provinces compete with us for investment, using business subsidies; some support their agricultural sector to a degree we can't compete with; some limit access of out-of-province companies and workers to business and employment opportunities.

Minister, is part of your approach to the equalization meeting to ensure that conditions are put in place so that the transfers to so-called have-not provinces are not utilized to unfairly compete with Ontario?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend's question seems to hearken back to the bad old Tory days of Mike Harris, when he had absolutely no interest in this country. His view was simply, "If it's not good for Ontario, I don't want to talk about it." He never went to Ottawa with the interest of the nation at heart. That has changed, and Ontario is back in Confederation with the election of this government.

That being said, I want to tell my friend that we will not support increases in equalization payments beyond what was proposed by the federal government at the first ministers' meeting back in September. They are generous, they are fair, they were the subject of agreement among Premiers at the meeting of the council of the federation in August, and we think they're worthy of support. That's the extent of our support.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I have a copy of a letter dated October 15 from Toronto Preschool Autism Service, one of the regional providers of IBI. The letter advises that Toronto Preschool Autism Service is changing two of its criteria to accept children into the IBI program. Firstly, as of January 1, 2005, only children with a confirmed diagnosis of autism at the severe end of the spectrum will be accepted. Secondly, effective October 15, only children under five will be accepted into the treatment program.

Minister, at a time when Toronto Preschool Autism Service is apparently receiving more money to provide IBI services, why is it that the agency is actually restricting the number of autistic children who can get IBI?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I really do appreciate the question. I was unaware of that, and if that correspondence is somewhere in my ministry and I haven't received it yet, I'd like a copy from the honourable member.

In fact, we have increased funding for the under-six program. We are reaching 20% more children now. We've actually broadened the definition of children who get help under the age of six.

This comes as a surprise to me. I'd like a copy of that letter, and I will look into it immediately.

Ms Martel: This is a really important issue for families with autistic children, because they thought, as a result of your announcement, more children were going to get more services.

I'm advised that your ministry has told IBI providers that they have to get rid of their waiting lists by mid-December. It appears that Toronto Preschool Autism Service is doing that by denying services to autistic children between the ages of five and six, because your

program allows them to have services up to age six. Parents thought that more money meant more services for more kids, not restrictions on those children who are waiting for treatment.

Minister, what are you going to do to guarantee that IBI providers are not cutting services for autistic children just to meet your wait-list deadline?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I thank the honourable member for bringing this to my attention. It is my direction that kids will have more services. We are reaching 20% more, right up until the age of six. The analogy I like to give with IBI is learning to read up to the age of six and then reading to learn. That's how we approach IBI. The experts told us to approach it in that way so that we teach children through IBI, up until the age of six, and then they use that learning after the age of six, where we put \$30 million in the school system for children with autism.

I thank the member for the question. I'd like a copy of that letter, and I'll look right into it.

ACTIVE2010

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. Just last week, my colleague from Markham stated that childhood obesity is on the rise in Canada. Our government has already taken positive steps by banning junk food in primary schools and reopening our schools for community use.

Today, you announced, along with the Premier, that Active2010 will provide funding to increase participation in sports and physical activities, particularly for children, youth and low-income individuals. We were happy to have Minister Ramsay at the newly renovated North Bay YMCA this morning, together with some of our community representatives—the mayor of Chisholm; a councillor from Powassan; some municipal representatives; representatives from our school board, including Colin Vickers from the Near North District School Board; and some sports and fitness advocates, including Dave Saad and some representatives from our Y—to share the news in the north.

Minister, how will Active2010 increase participation in sports and physical activity in our province?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): It's an excellent question. I think the member recognizes that perhaps some in the Legislature don't want to concede the importance of the prevention of many of the health problems that can exist in the province.

I have some figures here which would indicate that physical inactivity costs \$634 million in direct costs and \$1.2 billion in indirect costs to the health care system. Obesity costs the health care system \$647 million in direct costs and \$905 million in indirect costs. That is why we have developed programs which are going to encourage and facilitate the opportunity for people of all ages in the province, starting with children and those who

are very often denied the opportunity, to participate in physical activity as much as possible. That is why we're developing and funding those programs, to ensure that we are dealing with what the member has appropriately identified as a very serious health problem and with a general enhancement of lifestyle problems in this province.

1500

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm very glad to see that our government is addressing the need to encourage a healthier lifestyle in Ontario. As you're aware, many of the provincial sport organizations are housed in my riding of Don Valley West. These organizations have struggled for years. They're volunteer-based and have been struggling with a chronic underfunding problem, mainly caused by the previous government. As a result, these dedicated groups have had to cut programs that would have increased participation in their particular sport, and the children who most need access have lost access. We rely on these organizations to coordinate community volleyball, basketball, soccer, swim club, track, football, badminton and all the sports that build bodies, foster good habits and support healthy and safe communities. Minister, what does Active2010 do for these groups?

Hon Mr Bradley: In addition to the communities in action fund, which will allow individuals within communities—again, children and other groups that are not as active as they might be—to participate through special funding of special programs, we have put an additional \$1.5 million in sports organizations. As you know, for the last eight years in Ontario those sports organizations have not seen a penny of increase. So for the first time in eight years we will be investing in those sport organizations to try to restore some of the cuts that have been made as a result of the underfunding that took place in Ontario.

I invite all members who want to jammer at the government at this time to check with those sports organizations who for the first time since the Tories cut them to smithereens are finally getting some additional funding to enhance the quality of health and sport in Ontario.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. During your 2000 election campaign and just last week, you announced your famous report card championing your energy conservation culture in Ontario. You know that the first thing you did in your budget was to cancel the Energy Star program, which was instituted by our government. In fact, it was a way of providing incentives to consumers to begin reducing the amount of electricity that they were demanding from the province. Perhaps I could quote from your own ministry Web site: "Energy is good for your budget, your comfort and our environment. Energy conservation is a way to achieve that." Minister, our Energy Star program, which

you recklessly cancelled in your budget, did reduce the tax burden on people, made Ontario cleaner and helped our economy.

When are you going to come clean and clearly respond to the broken promise of failing to conserve electricity in Ontario?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We have a very clear, well-delineated plan to make conservation a cornerstone of Ontario's energy future. First of all, under Bill 100, we are creating the first conservation secretariat with a chief conservation officer—the first time in history. In Bill 4—the member would forget this—we incented LDCs with a quarter of a billion dollars to invest in new energy conservation programs. I say to my friends opposite, wait till next week, because I'm going to tell you something. It's happening, and it's happening bigger than it's ever happened before.

We have announced the installation of smart meters in this province: 800,000 by 2007; and 4 million by 2010. That will be every meter in the province of Ontario, which will empower consumers to manage their conservation.

We have set two targets which are measurable, identifiable and challengeable: 5% of government by 2007, 5% province-wide by 2007; 10% by 2010, a goal that we're proud of—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, I believe what you're saying to the people of Ontario is, "Just wait." In fact, there's nothing to wait for, because what you did in Bill 4 was break a promise when you raised the price of electricity. Not only that, but you went on in the budget to raise the price of electricity by reducing the Energy Star program and other tax measures that we incented on renewable energy. It's clear that you really don't have a plan except to increase the price of electricity.

But I want to get you on the record clearly today: Will you stand in your place and promise the taxpayers of Ontario, the consumers of Ontario, that you won't raise the price of electricity?

Hon Mr Duncan: The previous government's irresponsible price cap cancelled conservation in Ontario, and to be lectured by them about conservation is really something funny.

Do you know what was wrong with the Energy Star tax credit? It was rejected by everybody—business, consumers. Why? Because people would go and buy a new appliance and put the old appliance in their basement.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Would the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for Nepean-Carleton come to order, please.

The Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: The biggest failure of any government in history on electricity was that government. When they weren't rewarding their friends with multi-million dollar secret deals for Ontario Hydro and OPG, they

weren't doing anything about conservation. Prices spiked 22% under their energy policy. Why? Because they didn't think it through, they didn't plan it and they didn't do it right. That party's policy was a complete failure.

We're moving quickly to address conservation, and number two, to bring on new supply. And I'll remind the member that prices under the first year of a Liberal administration are down 17% from what they were in the last year of his administration in the wholesale market. That's an energy policy that works, that's a policy that serves Ontario and that's why they were rejected so overwhelmingly by the people of Ontario a year ago.

DETOX CENTRES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Detox centres across this province deliver a critical service and are an important part of the broad range of health care. Niagara's detox centre in St Catharines announced that it's going to shut its doors for six months in the peak of this coming winter, because after 12 years of no increases in funding, but for a 2% adjustment two years ago, it simply cannot sustain the service that it is capable of providing were it adequately funded. Other detox centres are in similar positions of having to shut their doors. In the case of Niagara, with its 22 beds for men and 14 beds for women, it's estimated that some 300 people who need this service will have the door slammed in their face.

Why are you letting Niagara's detox centre and other detox centres shut down their operations when they are so needed?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do think the honourable member raises an issue which would be of concern to all. I'm not familiar enough, top of head, with the issue related to Niagara. I will look into it and endeavour to get back to the member as quickly as I can.

I can in the meantime say that the issues he raises are somewhat well known. We can trace a pattern of no funding increase back through a fairly long period; I think he said 12 years. That reaches back to 1992. I think this does make the point about the challenge of adequately funding these. In my own case, I've had the opportunity to visit the detox in my riding at St Mike's and to celebrate their long service to the community. I know of its essential nature. So I will get back to the honourable member as quickly as I can with more detail.

1510

Mr Kormos: In the case of Niagara, the number is \$121,000-plus, \$122,000. And in fact, not only has the detox centre indicated that it's going to have to shut its doors this winter; it has indicated already that it is going to have to shut its doors for a period of weeks come the next fiscal year. It hasn't been since the NDP government in this province that these detox centres received any increase in funding—an admitted 2% increase two years ago, but no increase in broader based funding.

These detox centres, as you know, are the beginning of treatment and recovery for alcohol- and drug-addicted

women and men across this province. Closure of these detox centres means that people will be diverted to hospital emergency rooms, putting new stress on them. People will be diverted to volunteer-staffed out-of-the-cold programs, putting increased and new pressures on them. We're going to be filling our jails with drug- and alcohol-addicted people rather than treating them.

Will you assure this assembly today that you will address this funding shortfall and ensure that it is addressed effectively and adequately so that these centres can reverse their decisions and announce the reversal of their decisions to close their doors?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I remind the member of what I said in my earlier answer, which is that I'm going to work to get the information together and get back to him.

I agree that this is one element of our health care budget that is under considerable strain, and would agree with the honourable member that for three of the five years that the NDP was in power they did not raise the base budgets of these organizations. I think that's a concern that has carried forward and become even more dramatic over time.

On December 22, when I was doing a ride out with the EMS in Toronto, I had the opportunity to visit St Mike's detox. I agree very much with the analysis that the honourable member offers in terms of the vitally important role these detoxes provide in communities, and I endeavour to seek a resolution that is more satisfactory than the one the member outlines.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. On Friday, this government made a historic announcement for transit in this province. We announced that, for the first time, gas tax money will be shared with municipalities. In my reading alone, gas tax money will go directly to the TTC, and that's for the first time. What this means for the people of Scarborough Southwest is that new money will go to the three subway stations located in that riding. There will be better bus service on roads like Kingston Road and Eglinton Avenue, as well as reduced congestion on various roads.

Toronto is getting more than half the provincial gas tax funding, which totals \$81 million. The province has already committed \$128 million for the TTC in 2004-05, and with this additional \$81 million, the total comes to \$209 million.

Minister, what I'd like to ask you is, for the record, can you explain to my constituents, the people of Scarborough Southwest, what these new benefits mean to them and to all people in Ontario?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Actually, I'm very delighted to tell you that last Friday, the Premier and I and several of my colleagues were in Mississauga to make a very important announcement about the gas tax. We made a commitment to give two cents of gasoline tax to the municipalities and we are

delivering on it. Starting on October 1, we have set aside one cent of the gasoline tax. It will go to one and a half cents next October and, a year after, it will be the two full cents. I want to stress that this is permanent money, this is new money and it will give the municipalities the tools to start planning ahead. We are also providing municipalities with flexibility so they can use this money either for capital or for operating.

My friend asked, how will it benefit the communities? Definitely, funding transit will help reduce pollution, it will contribute to easing gridlock, it will make investments in transit attractive and it will make them more accessible.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I also have a question for the Minister of Transportation. As a member from the GTA, I too was surprised to hear about Toronto's lukewarm reception to the funding announcement. In my riding, Oakville received a total of over a million dollars and will be using that money to increase transit service to areas of Oakville that are currently not serviced. I know that my constituents and the municipal government in my own riding were extremely pleased with the commitment that we made and that we delivered on.

Minister, how are you responding to the strange and misguided comments from Toronto?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me say this again: We are very proud of the commitment that we made. Let me just tell you what the mayor of Mississauga said: "What a difference this will make to public transit here in Mississauga and across Ontario. It's great to see a government that realizes the value of public transit, puts this kind of funding into it and fulfills its promise."

I was in Waterloo on Friday, and the chair said, "More buses, more often, more efficiently." That's what transit riders in the Waterloo region can expect as a result of the new funding announced yesterday.

Not only just the mayors in Ontario, but the mayor of Halifax said, "We envy them," and he said they were, "decisions we look forward to from our province." Not only that, but the Leader of the Opposition said it's a good idea and a good first step.

I was disappointed to hear about some of the comments from Toronto, and I want to be very clear and tell the people of Toronto that this is new money. It's on top of all the programs we already have.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Well, Ollie, it's another fine mess you've got us into. You took over the registrar general's office, staffed by the good people of Thunder Bay to a great extent, and you have created absolute chaos. There are horror stories of delays over eight months, no telephone calls returned—including MPPs, by the way—and lost applications. You cut out same-day service and substituted emergency service. Well, let me tell you about that. All

provinces have emergency or rush services, but in Ontario you have to prove that there's an emergency. You're treating Ontarians like criminals, unlike other provinces. When are you going to stop treating Ontarians like criminals?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I'd like to welcome my new critic and thank him for his first question. I look forward to working with him. I have extended an opportunity to the member to fully brief him on the challenges and the opportunities that we've undertaken at the ORG within our ministry. We're still waiting to hear back from the member. The offer still stands.

I would suggest to the honourable member that he talk to some of the former Ministers of Consumer and Business Services who are in his caucus; he actually has three of them. Maybe he can ask them why, when they were in government, they cut back the ORG by 12% and some \$6.3 million. We're finally cleaning up the mess and the backlog that you left behind.

Mr Martiniuk: Well, isn't that a surprise? When you panicked in this portfolio, you went out and hired 151 new employees, and then you fired them all. You're right back where we were one year ago. Let me tell you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member for Cambridge, would you complete your question.

Mr Martiniuk: You and your administration have caused hardship, pain and suffering to the many people of Ontario who have tried to get birth certificates and marriage certificates, and yet the service you're providing—you say on your Web site it's six to eight weeks minimum. Well, what is happening in Ontario? Why, in PEI, can you get a birth certificate in 10 working days; Quebec, 20 days; Alberta, 24 days; Saskatchewan, two to three days; and here I've got a lady who has written to one of our members that it's taken over eight months? Can you imagine?

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Watson: I want that member to ask me a question every day. It's wonderful.

This is not back to the future. We're not interested in going back to the way your party ran the ORG. In fact, to correct the record, we still have those 151 hard-working employees fixing the mess that you created. I'd encourage the member, before he asks another question, to come on over. We'll give you a briefing. We'll introduce you to some of those 151 people who are helping to go through the backlog.

There are still backlogs at the ORG, but we've taken the backlog from about 30 weeks down to six to eight weeks for birth certificates. For birth registrations, we still have some way to go. That's why we've kept those hard-working employees on, to get to the level of service that I have a level of comfort in, to serve the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. You've claimed for a year now that you have fixed the problems at the registrar general's office. I want to bring to your attention today a particular problem.

When someone applies for a birth certificate and they live on a First Nation, they need to have a guarantor who can guarantee their identity. They go to their chief, who's duly elected, and they find out that their chief cannot act as a guarantor. But if they live in a non-native community, they can go to the mayor of the community and he or she, acting as mayor, can guarantee their situation.

Can you tell me, Minister—you claim that you've fixed everything—why it is that someone living in a First Nation community would be subjected to this kind of discrimination?

Hon Mr Watson: In fact, I think that's a very reasonable and thoughtful suggestion. I have already been in contact with a number of chiefs of First Nations. We have indicated to them that, with their support, we're more than willing to allow chiefs to have the same status as mayors and other individuals on the guarantor list. They'd be more than welcome to sit down with my colleague the minister responsible for native affairs to ensure that they have the same kind of access, as guarantors, as lawyers and other professions as long as they meet the criteria, and I believe they will.

Mr Hampton: I'm quite interested to receive that response after so many First Nations chiefs have raised it and my office has raised it.

I also want to raise this issue. One option might be for an aboriginal person to go to a police officer to have their identity guaranteed. When we look at the list of guarantors, a member of the Ontario Provincial Police, the RCMP, or a municipal police force can be a guarantor, but if you happen to work for Nishnawbe Aski Nation policing, I guess you can't. If you work for Treaty Three policing, you can't.

Once again, Minister, a year after you say you fixed the problems, can you tell us why a police officer who works for NAN policing or who works for Treaty Three policing somehow is not classified as a police officer for the purposes of guaranteeing someone's identity for a birth certificate?

Hon Mr Watson: I have the guarantor form here. It's my understanding—and I will verify this—in discussing this with my officials not too long ago that chiefs of police from the native community, the First Nations community, are in fact eligible.

I'm quite prepared—if you have some specific examples of a police chief from the native community who has been rejected, please send them over to me, because, quite frankly, if that is the case, that too is not acceptable.

I also point out the fact that I have not claimed that all of the problems are resolved at the ORG; far from it. But I can tell you that the McGuinty government—our Premier and this cabinet and this caucus—is serious about improving the level of service for all Ontarians. I would ask the NDP to stand up and apologize for their

12% cut in the ORG that cost \$3 million and created the backlog that we're now fixing.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: My question, and I'm sure the opposition wants to hear it, is for the Minister of Health. I understand that some hospitals have completed their construction projects or will have completed them later in the fiscal year. The problem is that unless these hospitals are provided with what is known as post-construction operating plan funding, these facilities may sit empty. I'd like to know what our plan is to deal with that and when they might expect funding for their operating costs.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very pleased to be able to announce to the House today news that that we'll shortly flow—or instantly, I suppose, if people are watching—to five hospitals in the province of Ontario, related to their post-operating cost construction. This is, of course, new construction in the province: Windsor Regional Hospital in 2004-05, \$8.1 million; St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton, \$3.3 million; Joseph Brant hospital in Burlington, \$1.8 million; Leamington hospital—in the member's home community, as I understand it—\$700,000; and Norfolk General, \$200,000.

I think this is further evidence of our commitment to work with Ontario's hospitals, to make sure they're continuing to be able to provide the incredibly important work in the province.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

“Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

“Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

“Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

“Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region ... health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners and have affixed my signature to this.

1530

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas North Americans (USA and Canada) have become continuously heavier, and overweight persons now make up over 65% of the population; and

"Whereas obesity among children has now been termed an epidemic; and

"Whereas diseases such as diabetes type 2, circulatory disease, knee replacements and some cancers are known to be associated with obesity; and

"Whereas such chronic diseases could be prevented by an active lifestyle and training,

"We, the unsigned citizens of Ontario, request that physical education be reinstated in our schools as a mandatory subject, with an emphasis on training toward lifelong productive skills."

I affix my name to this petition.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I affix my signature and support it.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I have affixed my signature as well, and I'm sending this to the clerks' table with page Anmol.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I will deliver this to you, Speaker, through page Norah.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have several more petitions to save the Leslie M. Frost Centre, and I shall read one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre has been Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and how they can be sustained for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre...."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a number of people in Toronto, Mississauga, Thornhill, Brampton and Etobicoke. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

I thank them for their petition, and I agree wholeheartedly will with it. I will have Alyscha carry it.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centres services in their own area....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos ... will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

I have affixed my signature as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today from the Chisholm chiropractic clinic, which is located at 200 Rubidge Street in Peterborough, Ontario. It says:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province" of Ontario.

I give it to my friend, page Justin.

1540

HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This petition is signed by thousands of good citizens of Cambridge.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government has plans to delist chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services from OHIP coverage; and

"Whereas 1.2 million people use chiropractic services each year in Ontario and many more, including numerous seniors, use physiotherapy and optometrist services; and

"Whereas these services are an important part of our health care and if privatized will not be available to those who cannot afford them;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not delist chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services from OHIP coverage."

I sign the same in support of it.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here from a group of employees of Skylink Travel. It's to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it reads:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occu-

pations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

This is a petition with which I wholeheartedly agree. I've signed it, and I'm going to have Norah carry it down.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 13, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The Member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker. You'll recall that I began my comments on this second reading debate a few days ago, and I have but seven or seven and a half minutes left before I have to wrap up.

Like everybody else here, I was down in Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St Catharines—not that everybody else was down in Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St Catharines, although they should have been, but they were in their respective ridings as well. I talked, just like everybody else here, to a whole lot of folks, a whole lot of Ontarians. I tell you, not one, not a single one of those people, expressed to me a fervour for being able to bring their own wine to a restaurant.

I had people tell me about their fear of ever-escalating hydro rates here in Ontario, about electricity prices that are skyrocketing because this government embarks on that foolish, painful and dangerous—145,000 jobs are at risk because of your electricity policy; 145,000 jobs here in Ontario because of your playing games and your

partnership with the private, for-profit electricity generation sector. I had people tell me about that.

I had people tell me about their fear of the privatization of health care here in Ontario. They were witnesses to the privatization of chiropractic treatment and optometry and physiotherapy. They know that's but the first shoe to hit the floor.

Folks talked to me about tuition fees, frozen for two years at the highest rate they've ever been. Thank you very much for freezing them when they're sky-high and unaffordable for the vast majority of young Ontarians and their families.

I had people talk to me about this Liberal government's shameful attack on persons with disabilities by virtue of but a 3% increase in the assistance provided to ODSP beneficiaries.

I had folks talk to me and express concern about the fact that the minimum wage was the victim of more spare-changing by the Liberals here at Queen's Park. Do you understand what I'm saying? When people elected Liberals, they voted for change and ended up getting spare-changed. They ended up getting but spare change.

I had folks talk to me about auto insurance premiums that continue to climb, notwithstanding this government's promise in the first instance to reduce them by 10% and then a subsequent reduction of 10%, when the reality is that the vast majority of drivers out there are continuing to get ripped off, robbed, mugged by their auto insurance companies, by the private, for-profit auto insurance sector here in Ontario that's been crying poverty for decades but has been laughing all the way to the bank with the hard-earned money of automobile owners and drivers, premium payers.

The only people who have committed more theft and stolen more money from more people, surely—I suppose Conrad Black would rank as a half-decent competitor to the auto insurance industry. If Barbara Amiel is in any way guilty by virtue of being the receiver of those stolen goods, she may fall into that same category. But there ain't a big enough jail cell in this province to contain the insurance industries that have committed crimes against innocent accident victims and against drivers and premium payers here in Ontario.

So here we are. This government sees as somehow a priority the proposition, bring your own wine. Why not bring your own crème brûlée? Why not bring your own carrot sticks? After all, the appetizer and the dessert are what add up when you're calculating a tab at the end of a meal. New Democrats are insistent that this bill go to broad-based public committee hearings.

First, MADD—Mothers Against Drunk Driving—indicate that they were not consulted, notwithstanding the impression that the minister has attempted to give, huh, Mr Dunlop? Mothers Against Drunk Driving have a history of credible and responsible input to legislative and policy endeavours by any number of governments of every political stripe, and I quite frankly consider Mothers Against Drunk Driving pretty much an authority on the issue of booze and access to booze and drinking

and driving. I'm interested in what Mothers Against Drunk Driving have to say about this legislation, because I know they're concerned about it.

The government paraded a couple of individuals purporting to speak for huge parts, huge numbers from the hospitality industry. I'm afraid they speak for much smaller portions than they would have us believe they do. I have no doubt that this government—in fact, they have—identified one restaurateur who's an advocate of bring your own wine, but I say to you that the vast majority of restaurateurs want nothing to do with this proposition. More importantly, don't just talk to the corporate owners or non-corporate owners. Talk to the wait staff.

I was at lunch recently, here in the city of Toronto, in a very good restaurant, not an inexpensive one by any stretch of the imagination. The waiter, whom I've known for some time, has been in the business for 30 years. He's just an impressive professional. He is a professional as a wait service person. I asked him his opinion about this bill. He thinks it stinks. He wants nothing to do with it. I encouraged him. If New Democrats were successful—I trust, along with the Conservative opposition here—in getting this bill before committee, I asked him, pleaded with him, to make sure that his voice and other voices like his were articulated loudly and clearly at those committee hearings with this government once again running roughshod over some of the hardest-working and lowest-income people in our communities: waiters and waitresses.

1550

In high-class, high-priced restaurants, people have for decades and will continue to bring their own wine—I know it's not advertised on the front door—and nobody has voiced any problem or complaint about it. Is it legal? I suppose not, but it's been happening. The reality is that the government is marketing this to try to make a meal, it says, more affordable. I say that this proposal will do nothing for the restaurant business, which depends largely on its non-food sales to make a profit. It will do nothing for wait staff, who depend upon tips to make their wages anything more than totally insignificant. The government should not be particularly proud of this bill, nor of the speed with which it wants to have this legislation passed.

Committee hearings: That's the bottom line, nothing less than that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr David Orazietti (Sault Ste Marie): I'm pleased today to make a few comments with respect to Bill 96. This is a bill that Minister Watson has shown tremendous leadership on. It is a very straightforward piece of legislation that should cause us very little difficulty in passing.

Mr Kormos commented with respect to meeting with MADD and consultations with other groups. Minister Watson has quite an extensive list of individuals he consulted with. In fact, Minister Watson met with the national director and CEO in Queen's Park here on

March 23, and he carried out a number of other consultations. Minister Watson was in my riding of Sault Ste Marie and met with the chamber of commerce, and numerous individuals expressed their concern. But as we proceeded to indicate what specific aspects of this legislation would apply and how they would work, the restaurant association seemed to have a greater appreciation for the impact of this.

Let's be very clear that jurisdictions such as New Brunswick, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec participate in bring your own wine and take home the rest. This is a very responsible piece of legislation, in my opinion. It allows individuals to take home wine they are unable to consume or do not wish to consume, relieving some of the pressure for them to finish the wine they have at their table and drive home.

I think it's a progressive piece of legislation. It's a responsible piece of legislation. In fact, we have comments from an opposition member here, Mr Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, who said, "I'm in favour of bring-your-own. Let's look at the best practices. I think it's good for consumers, good for tourism. It was always my feeling as consumer minister that we have to allow tourism operators to be innovative in order to compete with other locations."

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to do with the member for Niagara Centre, who spoke so passionately about Bill 96.

One of the questions he raised was really about priorities: Is this the top priority of the government, this bring your own wine legislation? He was talking about all the people he's been running into and if they've been raising this on the street. I would have to agree with him that I have not run into a single person who has raised this issue as I've gone around Parry Sound-Muskoka. I would suggest this is really a diversion from more important business that the government should be getting on with.

I can tell you some of the things I have been hearing about, though. I'm hearing a lot about the Leslie M. Frost Centre and how valuable it is to the people of Haliburton, to the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka, to the people of all different parties—those interested in the environment, those interested in education. There was going to be a conference there this fall, where 1,600 young school children were going to attend to learn about the importance of the environment and learn about water. Unfortunately, that conference, which was supposed to happen on September 30, was cancelled because they weren't able to find another location. That's what has happened because you closed the Leslie M. Frost Centre.

I'm hearing about Muskoka being taken out of the north. I've got a desk full of petitions on that issue, and on the fact that chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services have been cancelled. I'm hearing about the cost of people's insurance—auto insurance, motorcycle insurance. I'm hearing about hospital funding, for sure. South Muskoka Memorial Hospital has received a

1% funding increase for this year; Huntsville, 1%. Those are going to cause some really serious concerns in my riding.

Those are the things I'm hearing about in the riding. I certainly have not heard from any individual I've run into about this particular bill.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's my pleasure to join the debate and add a few remarks. I come from a community that is quite dependent on the tourism business. If you take a look at areas in Oakville, you'll find downtown Oakville with some of the finest restaurants in Ontario. I live in the other end of town, in Bronte. That's an emerging area that's starting to attract tourism from all over the province and New York state as well.

When I talked to restaurant operators and people in the hotel industry—and I understand some of the problems they've faced in the past—what they tell me they want is the flexibility to deal with problems, to deal with initiatives in their own way. They want the freedom of choice. They want to be able to exercise that freedom in a way that suits their establishment, in ways that may not suit others.

It seems to me, when you look at the patrons in Ontario, the consumers of Ontario and the restaurant operators, that somehow we've been able to deal with this issue in other jurisdictions in Canada. Take a look at New Brunswick and Alberta and Quebec: They seem to have implemented this type of legislation. Take a look at other countries. Take a look at Australia, the United States—several US states, actually. It's also available in British Columbia and Alberta.

It seems to me that it's the sort of thing whose time has come in Ontario. It's the sort of thing that I trust the hospitality industry and the consumers in Ontario have the maturity to deal with. It's a sign, to me, of a civilized society. It seems to me that people in Ontario should be able to avail themselves of the same rights, when it comes to their choice of restaurants and how beverages are served in those restaurants, as anybody else in Canada. To say, "We can't handle this," simply demeans the people of Ontario. I don't think this government's prepared to do that.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments to the member from Niagara Centre as well. I think he was very accurate in many of his comments. I have had no one come forward in my riding who supports this piece of legislation. I know the minister came forward with a couple of names of some restaurants—probably his buddies up in Ottawa—and he got some positive response from that. But I've had nothing but negative response from the restaurateurs and fine dining rooms in my riding of Simcoe North, and I have to take their word for that. Individuals aren't coming forward and telling me how wonderful this is. The restaurant people—the people who are employing the people, the people who are paying the taxes, who are buying these fine wines—have some strong concerns.

One of the concerns I haven't heard the minister talk about: The owner of one of the restaurants in our com-

munity has come forward—talking about liability and what kind of liability people have working in the restaurants when they serve wine that is brought by someone who's bringing their own wine from a store. I think what's important here are things like that.

Like the member from Muskoka, the people in my riding are talking about a number of things. One thing is the cutbacks to health care; there's no question about that. They're talking about the closing of the Huronia Regional Centre by the Minister of Community and Social Services. They're talking about the Frost centre, again, in Muskoka. They're talking about site 41 and why the environmental commissioner has one opinion on the approval process and the minister and her staff have another opinion on this.

I think there are a lot more important things that could be debated here other than this bill. I think this is something that, when there is nothing else to debate, you could bring forward and have a good time to debate it. But as far as I'm concerned, if we are going to proceed with this bill, which is unfortunate, we're going to have to have some very dedicated time and good conversation in committee on this as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: I'll tell you one group that this bill doesn't help at all, and that's Ontario's grape growers and wineries. You see, as it is now—and Mr Hudak from Erie-Lincoln can speak well, and will, I'm sure, on the relevance of this bill to our grape growers and wineries down in Niagara region—these wineries have become very aggressive in forging partnerships, relationships, with restaurants to showcase their wine, when access is not necessarily available to them in the best shelvage at the LCBO, which is a separate issue and a separate argument. They've become very good at getting out there, making arrangements and creating relationships with restaurants and restaurateurs to showcase Ontario wine. I say that's a good thing. I say it's especially good for those smaller boutique-type wineries. It's good for the grape growers down where I come from, and where Mr Hudak, Mr Bradley and Mr Craitor come from.

1600

The government hasn't indicated any concern about the fact that this bill will allow people to bring brew-your-own wine to that restaurant. It will allow people to bring wine from any source, whether legally or not so legally brought into the province or the country. I say it's yet another constituency that you'd better listen to very carefully during the course of committee hearings. I'm eager to hear from some of those tremendously hard-working ones, and they are, especially those family-run, boutique-type wineries down in Niagara region. I know there's the Pelee Island area as well. I don't want to pretend that the Niagara region has the only wine area in this province, but I'd be naive to call it anything but the best. But that's another very clear group of people we'd better listen to very carefully and understand all the ramifications. This is not the easy go that it appears to be

at first blush, and to treat it as such is naive, foolhardy and negligent.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Il m'a fait plaisir de participer à ce projet de loi, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool dans nos restaurants—restaurants titulaires d'une licence émise par la Régie des alcools de l'Ontario.

Cette loi permettra aux propriétaires de restaurants d'endossement du ministère permettant au consommateur d'aller prendre un repas et apporter sa propre bouteille de vin.

J'entendais tout à l'heure les commentaires du membre de Niagara-Centre. At the beginning, the member said that he was against this project, but at the end, in his two minutes, he said, "We have grape growers; we have wineries. If there is an area in Ontario where it would be the most beneficial for the winery people and for the grape growers, it would be the Niagara area."

I'm saying that because the majority of tourists coming to Ontario go to Niagara Falls. When they find out that they are able to purchase a bottle of wine, go to a restaurant and bring their own wine, you'll see an increase in restaurant business in the Niagara area.

J'ai eu l'expérience moi-même lors des journées des rencontres familiales. Lorsqu'il arrive le temps de Pâques, par exemple, je me rends sur le côté du Québec, à Hull, pour prendre un repas avec la famille. Nous sommes 45, 50 personnes. Pourquoi allons-nous au Québec? C'est parce que nous pouvons apporter notre bouteille de vin. La fête des Mères, c'est la même chose.

Les restaurants à Hull sont remplis à craquer de personnes qui attendent en ligne avec leur bouteille de vin en main. Puis, tout le temps les restaurants dans la région d'Ottawa, côté ontarien, sont presque vides aux temps des fêtes. Pourquoi? C'est parce que nous n'avons pas en place une loi comme celle que nous sommes en train de passer.

Si je regarde dans les autres juridictions, nous savons que c'est maintenant permis au Québec, en Alberta, au Nouveau-Brunswick et en Colombie-Britannique. À la ville de New York même c'est permis de se rendre au restaurant avec sa bouteille de vin.

In Ontario we are recognized for our camping grounds. Visitors to a camping ground in Ontario are what I really call tourists. They come in, they become like a family in that big camping ground, and at times they go and buy a bottle of wine. They would like to go out to a restaurant, gather up a group of people, of families, from the camping ground and have a bottle of wine. At the present time, they cannot do it. I look at Kittawa in Limoges—impossible. I look at the Niagara Falls area for the campers—impossible, all over Ontario.

This will bring additional business to restaurant owners in Ontario. I hope every one of us will support this bill, because we know the hard times we went through with SARS two years ago. Tourism in Ottawa is

down by 1.8 million visitors. We are right at the Quebec border. We know how much the fact that we cannot keep our restaurants busy affects business. The day we get royal assent for this bill, you will see restaurants applying to municipalities to get building permits to expand their restaurant facilities. There is no way that the people could turn back on this bill. It's a must.

In the province of Quebec at the present time, in the Ottawa Le Droit, it was very clear: Now we are looking at bring your own beer; not only wine, but bring your own beer. So it shows that it benefits all the restaurant owners and brings additional tourism.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm going to leave my friend to take over.

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'm honoured and pleased to join my friend the honourable member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in the debate on Bill 96, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004. If passed, this act will give the people of Ontario a choice, a freedom, a liberty to bring their own wine when they visit a restaurant of their choice.

This act is yet another instance where our government, the McGuinty government, is striking a balance between what is fair and what is right, and doing so in the best interests of all Ontarians.

This act will provide the proper tools for those who enforce our Liquor Licence Act and those who seek new and interesting ways to promote economic opportunity for business. Most importantly, it will also ensure that the proper safeguards will be put in place to curb the spread of underage drinking and drunk driving.

Before I get into the analysis of the bring your own wine and take home the rest portions of this act, I first want to speak to the change that has taken place in this province because of this government's approach to legislation. Over the past year, our government has introduced a number of important pieces of legislation that have set the stage for transformation in this province. In that time, a little more than 12 months, we have introduced and passed a number of progressive bills, and this bill is one of the very progressive bills.

One such progressive bill is Bill 56, the Employment Standards Amendment Act. That bill provides job security and protection for family members who must take a medical leave of absence to look after a terminally ill family member. When crafting that bill, the Minister of Labour took a balanced and thoughtful approach, taking both the concerns of employees and employers into consideration. The result was a bill that marks a vast improvement in our province's dedication to respecting the professionalism and expertise that workers contribute to the workplace while respecting the needs of the employer.

The second bill that I passionately desire to plug is our government's recent introduction of Bill 118, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. If passed, a timeline will be established and a mechanism of enforcement enacted, which will finally make this province accessible to all Ontarians. The Minister of Citizen and Immigration, Dr Marie Bountrogianni, allowed me the

privilege to be a part of the consultation process while I was her parliamentary assistant.

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What strikes me about this present Bill 96 and these pieces of legislation is the renewed desire of our government to listen to the concerns of those affected under proposed legislation and to craft bills that truly reflect the interests of all Ontarians. Bill 96 is yet another example of our government's approach to provide the citizens of Ontario with the ability to enjoy dining opportunities similar to those enjoyed by the residents of New Brunswick, Quebec and British Columbia. I used to have a medical practice in New Brunswick for eight years and I know how much the residents of New Brunswick enjoy this kind of act.

This will also simultaneously show that the bring your own wine portion of this legislation applies only to the restaurant owners who wish to be a part of the voluntary program. What also make this legislation so progressive is the re-corking component, which actually provides an incentive not to drink all the wine that a restaurant patron brings with them.

I support this bill. I think this bill is yet another example of the McGuinty government's commitment to a balanced approach to legislating change in this great province of ours.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise again this afternoon to speak on this bill. Although it's bring-your-own-wine, I guess we're back to what I call an almost short-sighted type of legislation. With so many issues in our province—economic issues, health care issues, education issues and a lot of local riding issues—here we are debating whether we should bring our own wine to a restaurant.

It's difficult to see why the minister is in such a rush to get this piece of legislation through. Maybe it's a Christmas thing. Maybe they want to have it so they can have some kind of special government advertising process around Christmas and they can try to pat themselves on the back for this piece of legislation.

But you know, I just can't believe that there was no consultation with Mothers Against Drunk Driving. That is the part—I can understand why they wouldn't want to consult with the NDP caucus or the Conservative caucus, and I can understand why they probably didn't want to talk to the police associations or the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, because neither one of them have an official position on this at this point. But I can tell you, Mothers Against Drunk Driving is one of the most credible organizations, not only in Canada but in North America as we promote anti-drinking and driving, and they are opposed to this legislation. We haven't seen any support whatsoever, not even any consultation. So that's disappointing from our point of view.

It's disappointing, I think, for many members of the Liberal caucus, as we go forward with this piece of legislation, that one of the key stakeholders in the fight against drinking and driving has not been consulted on

legislation that definitely may have effects on their organization.

Mr Kormos: I'm just disappointed—not surprised, because nothing surprises me here anymore, or ever will—at the manner in which government backbenchers are treating this as if it was such a modest proposal and it should be a done deal, when, in fact, there are a whole lot of considerations. I just find it remarkable that the government wouldn't, through its minister or through the Premier or through the House leader, resolve the concern around lack of public hearings on this matter and say that there will be broad-based, province-wide public hearings around this issue.

Surely we want to hear from restaurateurs, we want to hear from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, we want to hear from the police, we want to hear from the LCBO. I want to hear from the small wineries—and big wineries, for that matter—here in the province of Ontario. I want to hear from waiters and waitresses who work hard, making, yes, our dining-out experiences pleasant things. I want to hear from the hotel industry.

The argument is being made that somehow we've got to fight back against what was a horrible year last year in the hospitality service industry. I come from down in the Niagara region, down close by Niagara Falls; we know that as well as anybody. But you're not talking, once you're up in the Toronto area, about creating a competitive edge. Surely nobody goes to Montreal because on Prince Arthur Street you can go to the dépanneur and buy a bottle of cheap plonk to have with your pasta while you sit outside, serenaded by buskers. Give me a break. You go to Montreal for Notre Dame, down in Old Montreal. You go there to climb to the top of St Joe's and the basilica. You go there for any number of reasons, not because you can buy not-so-good wine, cheap wine at the dépanneur, the corner store, to reduce your dining-out cost. It's a fallacy if we base this legislation on that premise.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): There's an old folk song with the line that people just hear what they want to hear and disregard the rest. Talking about bringing in your own wine—I think that it fits here in the Assembly. People bringing in their own wine are whining that the restaurants want nothing to do with it. That's not true. In fact, the program will indeed be voluntary. They're whining that there'll be open bottles in cars, when those who are whining about that know the legislation specifically precludes that. They're whining that it will mean major changes in liability, when that's not the case at all. The liability not only will be maintained but in fact strengthened. They're whining that you won't be able to bring in locally made wine, that we would have no control over what people are drinking, when the legislation says quite clearly that only commercially available wines will be subject to this.

I guess the most disturbing whine of all is that this legislation somehow reduces our commitment to public safety. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this legislation will require enhanced training for people

who serve liquor. It will require that bottles being taken home—and the whole reason for being able to take them home is actually to encourage responsible liquor consumption.

Mr Kormos: The bill says nothing about that.

Mr McMeekin: It does, indeed. We talk about re-sealing bottles. We're talking about strengthening enforcement tools.

As for consultation, some are whining that we haven't had enough consultation. Not only have we consulted widely—including, by the way, the police association and MADD—but the government has an ongoing commitment to extensive additional consultation and provincial hearings with respect to regulations affecting this bill.

Mr Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the talk from the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

As I previously said, I think the introduction of Bill 96 is really just a diversion from the real problems this government should be addressing. In terms of Bill 96, which is the bring your own wine bill, I really don't have a problem with it. I think there are some positives to it. I think that for some rural and remote and northern areas, it allows a little more flexibility. I really think, in the total scheme of things, it'll be probably a very tiny percentage of restaurants and businesses that will actually use this option. I would hazard to guess it'd be less than 5%, probably 1% or 2%, of restaurants that would actually use this option.

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I think there are some positives, like allowing people to take a part bottle of wine home. I think that makes sense, because of our natural desire to want to consume something once we've paid for it. Allowing somebody to take a part bottle home, with the right conditions, is not a bad thing.

I also agree with the member from Niagara Centre that this should be going to committee. There should be consultations and input from organizations like MADD Canada. The last thing we want to do is add to drinking and driving situations.

As I've said, this is really just a diversion because the government doesn't want to talk about some of the important things that we should be talking about. As the northern critic, I know that in the northwest the two top issues, in terms of a poll that was just done, are wanting tax reductions to create jobs and making sure they have affordable, reliable power.

This bill, of course, is not talking about any of those things. I think it should go to committee. I think there should be further input from the restaurant associations, MADD Canada and other concerned stakeholders.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kular: First of all, I want to thank the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Simcoe North, Niagara Centre, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and Parry Sound-Muskoka for giving their input.

Minister Watson had a very wide consultation with a lot of stakeholders before he brought this bill in; to name a few of them, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Ottawa and Toronto police services, AMO, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, Tourism Niagara, the city of Ottawa, the city of Toronto, the city of Windsor, the city of Kingston and numerous restaurants.

Let me say what Rod Seiling, president of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, says about this bill. He says, "These changes are progressive and will enable the industry to better serve its diverse customer base." That's what he says.

I agree with Rod Seiling that this is a progressive piece of legislation. Mr Watson has done widespread consultations.

In fact, what this bill does is give the liberty, respect and freedom for Ontarians to bring their own wine when they go to the restaurant of their choice. They also can have the wine of their choice.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise as part of the Bill 96 debate and join the discussion.

A couple of notes as we begin this evening's debate: I think it's always important to cite for the record that the members of the government side are not taking up their full time allotted for debate.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): What?

Mr Hudak: Shockingly true. We've seen a pattern emerging already. We're only a couple of weeks into this legislative sitting, which began late. We've already seen the government members very much limiting their remarks.

You don't have to do it, I say to my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. You've been here long enough. You get your briefing notes, and you read them into the record. You can actually say more. If you get to briefing note page 2 and it says that your colleague will read pages 3 and 4 that the minister's office gave you, you can say more. You're not going to get in trouble.

Mr McMeekin: Tim, we could go forever, but we don't need to.

Mr Hudak: Send the notes over. I'd be glad to look at the notes.

I have to tell you that I saw one member speak for, I think, six minutes and the other member speak for seven minutes when they could have 20 minutes each on this debate. If this is a priority bill from my colleagues across the floor, I say that it's passing strange. Surely the whip—who, I know, is usually here—isn't cracking down on you saying that you're limited to six or seven minutes, because you can push back and say, "Do you know what? I know about the people back in Ottawa-Orléans," or, "I know about the folks back in Peterborough. This is what they've said about Bill 96. They're all behind it. That's why we need it on the floor. I'm going to take my full 20 minutes to talk about what I'm hearing back in Peterborough, by way of example."

I just wanted to note that the members on this Bill 96, among others, are exhibiting a disturbing trend of limiting their remarks significantly, to about one third of the time that they're allotted. I tell you, I've been here; I've been there. I've been in that back row corner. You don't have to read only the notes. You can take the full 20 minutes.

Fear no repercussions. The member for Brant is all bark and no bite. Take your full 20 minutes and know the folks in Minister Watson's office are very accommodating. They're strongly supportive of this bill in his office. They wanted to have time, so take the 20 minutes. Talk about how important it is back in the riding. Don't feel pressured to keep your remarks short—just friendly advice from the good-natured member from Erie-Lincoln.

The second aspect: I think it's always important to talk about how these bills were born here in the Legislature. Unless I'm mistaken, my recollection is that when the minister first began talking about bring your own wine—and take the rest home, perhaps—do you remember what the big issue was in the media? The big issue in the media was the scandal enveloping the Minister of Finance surrounding Royal Group. The Legislature wasn't sitting. We didn't have an opportunity to address those issues in question period, so they used one of the oldest tricks in the book.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The trick worked, because you talked about alcohol, and bang, all the media attention was about bringing your own wine to restaurants. There's no doubt: You can talk about alcohol or dogs, I guess, alcohol or anything to do with animals, and the media attention gets diverted. You were successful. The media interest at the time in the Sorbara affair, the scandal enveloping the finance minister as he prepared for the 2004-05 budget, evaporated.

Mr McMeekin: Why don't you mention he was cleared by the Integrity Commissioner?

Mr Hudak: Well, I don't know if we've heard the last of this issue; I really don't. We don't know where the investigations will arrive at the end of the day. The member has made up his mind. I'm going to maintain my independence on this issue to see what we actually find out with respect to Royal Group. We'll look forward to what the RCMP or the police forces bring forward.

And no doubt about it, I bet you when that comes forward, if it's bad news for the government, they're going to talk about alcohol or they're going to talk about animals to try to divert attention. I don't think it's going to work next time. Alcohol in movie theatres: I'm saying here that will be the next one he will throw out as a trump card to divert attention from bad-news stories for the government.

I think it's important that we always try to recollect how these bills came into being in the Legislature. It worked. Everybody on TV and radio, for days afterwards, talked about bringing your own bottle of wine, and it turned the page on the scandal surrounding the

finance minister. We will see if the next card you want to play will similarly be successful or not. That remains too be determined.

The third point: I think it's got to be pretty tough to be in the hospitality sector today in general, with 9/11, with the close on the border, with tourism, particularly with international travellers withdrawing from using Canada as one of their preferred destinations. I think those things are all related. Thankfully, we're seeing some improvement, but not at the pace that I, coming from Niagara, would enjoy seeing. We have a way to go.

The general environment for the hospitality industry has not been strong—in fact, far from it—these last number of years.

Mr McMeekin: It's been a struggle, hasn't it?

Mr Hudak: It has become more of a struggle, when you look at the overall attacks—maybe that's too harsh a tone—of the McGuinty government on the hospitality sector. I could list a few of these initiatives.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Since my colleague opposite shows so much interest in this, I will proceed down this path to talk about the impacts in the context of Bill 96 that the McGuinty government is having on the hospitality sector. To put it mildly, as an understatement, I would not say that the relationship of the hotel, motel and restaurant operators with the McGuinty government is a strong one today.

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I can't blame them, because I think the Liberals—Dalton McGuinty got his hand caught in the cookie jar with this whole fat tax issue, this attempt by Dalton McGuinty to tax all meals under \$4. They went through a series of verbal gymnastics trying to describe what that tax was all about. Initially, it began as simply closing a loophole that existed. The member from the Cornwall area—

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Mr Hudak: I apologize; Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh—remembers the discussion on the fat tax debate. Initially, it was simply to close a loophole. The hospitality sector responded quite strongly to that, and then they switched to the health side, that it was an attack on fat and we had to do something about fat in the food. By golly, the food courts in all the malls across the province were the sum of all malevolence attacking working families in the province. So we're going to go after these \$4 meals, clamp down on them and save our families from the evils of fat in the food of the hospitality sector.

They did a great job, the Ontario chapters and the Canadian chapters, in pushing back and saying, "That ain't so." They said it ain't so and it ain't. They said that in fact a lot of these \$4 meals were soup and salad. The tide began to turn, that this was nothing but a blatant tax grab by the Dalton McGuinty government, hitting primarily seniors and working families in the province who did not initially pay any tax on meals under \$4 and

then were going to be hit by this whopping tax on meals under \$4. Hospital and school cafeterias were cited as a couple of examples.

We saw a concerted campaign by the hospitality industry, supported by members of our caucus, I'm proud to say, and members of the NDP caucus. It went from the loophole to the health campaign. Eventually, we pulled it out of them that they were not going to do it, but I have no doubt Dalton McGuinty and Greg Sorbara's fingerprints were all over the proverbial cookie jar when it came to the fat tax and, thankfully, their climb down from that tax.

But their plan to lay it to the hospitality sector, to really give them the old what-for continued. I'm afraid there may be some resident anger, some vindictiveness from members of the Liberal cabinet who feel that the hospitality sector—the first ones that had the strength to stand up to a relatively new government. I think they have actually turned to other initiatives that are having a significant punishing impact on our foodservice industry, our pubs in Ontario, which already have a difficult economic environment that has certainly been very unfavourable the last number of years.

They didn't get hit with the fat tax, but they got whacked with Dalton McGuinty's new taxes: his corporate taxes, business taxes, as well as a new health premium. Mom-and-pop operators, if they're both working, could be looking at over \$1,000 in increased taxes impacting on their business. So not only dealing with the difficult economic climate, but on top of that, a significant increase directly in the bottom-line costs through Dalton McGuinty's famous and most infamous of broken promises—the tax hikes.

I seem to recall Dalton McGuinty looking into the TV cameras saying that he would not increase taxes on working families in Ontario. Maybe my screen was too small. Maybe I needed a big screen. Evidently he had his fingers crossed when he said that, and increased taxes substantially.

Probably on the top five list of infamous Dalton McGuinty broken promises is the hydro increase, smacking into not only working families and seniors but right into the hospitality sector's bottom line in addition. So a tough economic climate, higher taxes—again, it's a broken promise—and contrary to an election promise by Dalton McGuinty, hydro increases. We had brought in a cap particularly to assist small businesses. The hospitality sector benefited from that cap to hold the line on hydro costs.

Probably number two, maybe number three, of the top five infamous Dalton McGuinty broken promises: increased hydro rates. Labour costs, as well, have gone up, so hydro, labour costs and higher business taxes.

Then, for the first time in 10 years or so, I believe, an increase in beer taxes in the province; alcohol taxes up significantly. So in the hospitality sector, licensed establishments have been hit by a broken promise on higher taxes and a broken promise on higher hydro rates, higher labour costs and a broken promise on higher taxes for

alcohol. If they had campaigned on that, I think that's one thing, but they campaigned on the opposite. The hospitality sector, as a result, has been hit four times over. It dodged one important bullet on the so-called Dalton McGuinty soup-and-salad tax, because people fought back and killed that one before it was able to rise from the ground—but four bullets.

Mr McMeekin: It was never part of our plan.

Mr Hudak: The member says, "It was never part of our plan." Come on. None of this was part of your plan. Your plan was not to increase taxes on working families or these particular small businesses. The hydro increase was certainly not part of their plan. I think the problem with the Liberal government is that as soon as Dalton McGuinty got the keys to the limousine, he tossed his plan out the window. As a result, you end up with a government that is going to places that you didn't expect or didn't want them to go. There are a number of examples like that. Certainly the hospitality industry would say, "We did not expect Dalton McGuinty to increase our taxes. We did not expect him to increase the tax on one of our products, on alcohol. We did not expect him to increase our hydro costs." All of these things put together have made a difficult climate even tougher.

So I would ask the members if maybe they could reply. What did the hospitality industry ever do to you guys? I often, almost always, have a good time at a pub, a bar, a restaurant in the great riding of Erie-Lincoln or if I'm here in the Legislature. I think they give outstanding service. They treat me well. I try to be a good customer in return. What did the hospitality industry ever do to you that you brought down Dalton McGuinty's economic hammer on the hydro sector?

That's the context of the bill: how she was born, under what circumstances, trying to distract attention from the Sorbara scandal. Also, my colleagues on this side of the floor, and hopefully across the floor, will address significant negative impacts on the hospitality sector as a result of Dalton McGuinty's broken promises. In many ways, they're paying the price. We will have to see how the members respond in terms of what did the hospitality—maybe it was that they fought back against the fat tax. They had to get them as a result. I hope we will be edified as to what the hospitality industry did to deserve this kind of attack from the Liberal government.

With respect to the particulars of this bill, I agree, I think it's important for us to continue to modernize our liquor licensing laws. In many senses, we're caught back in Victorian times. I think, if you travel across the world, areas that want to be a mecca for tourists—like Toronto, like the Niagara Peninsula, like Ottawa—do need new tools to help attract those tourists and to push back a bit against some of these dangerous policy changes, these broken promises the Liberals have implemented that hurt the hospitality sector.

In fact, we had a significant number of changes to the Liquor Licence Act that I was proud to be part of as Minister of Consumer and Business Services. One example: We had some stadium laws that were so far out

of date. If you had a professional team, you could serve beer or alcohol in tiered seating, but there was a winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in my colleague from Niagara Falls' riding, that had an amphitheatre that played classical music or maybe showed some Shaw or old movies. They were not allowed to take their wine from the tent to their seats. In fact, they had to get up in the middle of the performance, run up the stairs, run behind the fence into the tent, drink their wine and quickly get back to their seat, so as to not miss one of their favourite songs or numbers. If they actually had torn down the vineyard and created a professional team in a stadium—the Niagara Grape Stompers, for example—they would be allowed to take the beer or the wine to their seats. But because of, for example, this restrictive and older law that needed to be revisited, now they can work and serve as a tourism attraction—a much better situation.

Beer on the golf courses is another one; in 1996 changing the close to 2 am from 1 am. Particularly those from border areas saw a lot of people fleeing the province to go across the border for the 3 am close in New York state, and I'm sure it was similar in other states or across the border into Quebec. I think these changes were important to make.

I certainly do believe that while this—bring your own bottle and, I hope, take the rest home—will be grasped by a niche market at the end of the day, probably the vast majority of those in the industry will not take advantage of this and will be opposed to it, but I do think it's an important option as we modernize our Liquor Licence Act.

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Take the rest home: I think people may be tempted, if there is an expensive bottle of wine on their table—maybe they're out for a date and they don't want to finish the bottle—to say, "It's a significant investment; it's a lot of money, that bottle of wine," and they would finish it off. I think it will actually cut down on risky drinking and driving if those customers are allowed to seal the bottle, and take it home in a safe and secure environment. That means to say that you need to continue to consult with MADD and with police forces to make sure that these changes are done in a sensible manner.

I think there is more to be done in terms of cracking down on hospitality establishments that are besmirching the image of the hospitality sector, that may be controlled by crime or by biker gangs or have a history of passing licences around, covering these types of establishments from the scrutiny of the law. I think it's important to continue down that path.

Minister Watson, whom I've had the pleasure of knowing for many years, dusted off some proposals that were there in the ministry, which, in some cases, like those I've mentioned—

Mr McMeekin: You were going to say something nice now, weren't you?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to see it. The fact that he has brought these forward to the Legislature—my colleagues make a good point. Is it a grand list of priorities, like

health care and education and taxation, at the top of the line?

Mr McMeekin: But you're glad to see it, aren't you?

Mr Hudak: Perhaps not. But if the minister is interested in dusting off some old proposals, the one I suggest that he does dust off, in addition to this, is VQA stores, to help promote Ontario wine.

We made tremendous progress in the Ontario grape and wine industry under the previous Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments. Direct delivery, for example, allowing wineries to sell directly to hospitality establishments; the lower tax rate that's a big boon for the industry; working with the LCBO to add on 1.1 kilometres of additional shelf space for Ontario VQA, for 100% grown product, 100% VQA wines—the equivalent of seven normal LCBO stores. Great progress. I want to encourage the government to continue the biggest marketing initiative in the history of the LCBO for Ontario wines, conducted with phenomenal success. I forget the exact per cent, but it was a significant double-digit increase in sales as a result.

You hear from the grape growers and the wine industry that they're hearing on the radio about the Australian promotion, "Buy the Australian wine." They say, "What about Ontario VQA product?" The spinoffs for agriculture, hospitality and tourism are enormous. So I encourage my colleagues to keep pushing the minister, one of which should be the VQA legislation, which was in a bill that the Liberals had voted for previous to the dissolution of the government. Call it forward. Dust that one off as well and put it before the Legislature, because we want to see it—

Mr Kormos: One hundred per cent Ontario product.

Mr Hudak: One hundred per cent Ontario product—VQA only, to allow new outlets for sales. I want to encourage you in that direction. Speak with the minister. He brought part of this forward, as part of the plan, VQA stores.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: Right off the bat, I want to endorse the 100% Ontario grape content in Ontario wine. The silly argument that somehow we don't have the capacity in Ontario to grow that grape is nuts; it's stupid. We can generate capacity. If we don't have that capacity, we create a level of scarcity and maybe grape growers will get paid what their grape is really worth, which is a heck of a lot more than they're being paid for that grape now. So I endorse 100% Ontario grape, Ontario juice in Ontario wine. That's number one.

Number two, I am still hard pressed—and I look forward to having the minister in committee to ask this minister which one of his backbenchers was knocking on his door saying, "Mr Watson, I've got to be able to bring wine to the restaurant the next time I go out to have dinner." I want to know which restaurant called him and said, "Minister, we've got to be able to let people bring their own wine, because, before you know it, they'll be bringing their own crème brûlée," because, Lord knows, desserts add a whole lot to the restaurant tab, don't they?

Look, it's not just your main course; it's those appetizers, those drinks and those desserts.

I want to know where it was. What constituency in Ontario rattled the cage of this minister to the point where he sat down with his personal computer one night and drafted this bill? It's not a very long bill, so I have no hesitation in telling you the minister himself drafted it.

The other problem I've got is taking home your half-empty bottle. I'm not going to dispute that we've got to find ways of discouraging people from drinking it up just to drink it up, so they get drunk, especially if they're going to drive themselves home, but I'm dearly interested in listening to this minister explain to us how wait staff in a restaurant are going to be forced to comply with provincial regulation when it comes time to sealing that half-empty bottle so patrons can take it home.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Stoney Creek. *Applause.*

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I brought my fan club with me.

Mr McMeekin: You'd know all about good wine.

Ms Mossop: Yes, we know about good wine down in Niagara. We're finishing off the Niagara complement here. This is the third in a row. We're coming closer and closer here.

Wine is a huge issue down in the Niagara region, and all the members from that area speaking today know that. I'm still trying to figure out why this is such a really huge issue. I like to go out to restaurants, and a lot of the restaurants I go to have excellent food, but they don't happen to have necessarily the space or the conditions or the desire to spend a lot of money on putting in a big wine cellar with a wide selection of wines. One aspect of a very good dinner is a good bottle of wine to go with it. So for the owners of these smaller restaurants or mom-and-pop operations that provide an excellent home-cooked dinner, this means you can bring your own bottle of wine, a very good bottle of wine that will match the very good food you're having, and the owner of the restaurant doesn't have to worry about keeping a large wine cellar with all the necessary and appropriate conditions that calls for, and also the expense. They have to buy all that wine up front. That's quite a huge expense for some people. So this is a solution. I can go to my favourite restaurant, I can have excellent food and I can bring a good bottle of wine along with me, and it's not an inconvenience or an extra expense or a problem for the owner. They can concentrate on their great food and I can choose a bottle of wine that is going to suit this wonderful dinner.

I don't think it's a great deal. It happens all over the world. It's not something that's mandatory here either. We're not jamming this down anybody's throat. It's an opportunity for people to have a little bit more flexibility, a little bit more choice, on both the owners' side and the consumers' side.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I just want to comment on the comments made by the member from Erie-

Lincoln, the former minister who had some hand in drafting much of what is debated in Bill 96.

For the record, I want to put something that's relevant to my constituents and indeed to my own personal circumstances. Some of you might know that I have a daughter who's married and lives in Australia; she married the fellow. We've been down a couple of times, and in Australia this is the norm. You would know that they live near the Hunter Valley area, a great wine-growing area where there is a variety of wines. It's an exhaustive inventory of wines so it's quite natural that people want to bring their own favourite selections. It goes over unencumbered. What they do have is a method of ensuring that there is uniformity in rewarding or remunerating, in the tips.

As far as removing a partially completed bottle from the establishment, along with MADD and other issues of community safety, I think the minister needs to listen and ensure the enforcement of the law regarding drinking wine outside of your own establishment.

In my riding of Durham there are two areas where they grow grapes and other fruit wines: Archibald Orchards—Fred and Sandy Archibald; I've mentioned them many times—as well as Ocala Winery, which is Irwin and Alissa Smith. I would love to see their wines served in local restaurants. They would love it, I'm sure. So it helps business; it helps small business.

I would also like to mention that locally we have some establishments that are extremely worth visiting. One is a local restaurant known as Silks. I know the chef, Frank, very well. Silks has a limited inventory, but also Fazio's in Oshawa has a tremendous inventory of wine. This offers consumers choice and flexibility, and I support much of what the member from Erie-Lincoln said.

1650

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for their positive comments with respect to my debate on this bill. I do encourage the minister and the colleagues who supported it in the House to move forward with allowing VQA wine stores to exist in the province of Ontario, a way to showcase our award-winning Ontario wines, particularly in tourism areas, to Ontario consumers and, very importantly, those visiting from abroad. I think that can do a lot for our sales, with spinoffs in agriculture, tourism and the hospitality sector.

I want to encourage members to continue down the path of the previous ministers, like Ministers Tsubouchi, Runciman and Sterling—I had the opportunity to work in CBS as well—great strides to help support our Ontario wine industry, particularly the VQA-type wines and the impacts on the grape sector.

I see here in my notes that we had some significant success, particularly in 2002-03, where sales of VQA wines were up 11.5%. I mentioned the additional 1.1 kilometres in shelf space. I talked about the marketing program, the plan for a dedicated VQA area in all of the LCBO's Vintages sections to drive those sales, I think by 170%.

Dalton McGuinty then moved the LCBO, a key partner in this, to another ministry entirely. I'm not sure about the capacity, the functioning, between CBS, economic development, and trade and tourism. Maybe it was done for the right purposes. Some would suppose it was done to give the minister some bonus in his industry, because I know the relationship between the minister and the Premier has not always been the best.

I wanted assurance from our colleagues across the floor that our start would be just that—a start—and greater strides will be made for our VQA wines across the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It is a pleasure for me to participate in this debate this afternoon. Since my colleague from Timmins-James Bay is not here, it has now fallen to me to speak here this afternoon.

Mr Yakabuski: That's the other bill: BYOC, bring your own car.

Mr Kormos: Bring your own notes.

Ms Martel: Bring your own notes is what I'm actually thinking about. I do have a note, though, from the chamber of commerce, but I'm not going to get to that yet. I also want to tell you that not only do I have the pleasure of speaking on this bill here this afternoon, but guess what? I'm going to do my leadoff tonight, a full 60 minutes on An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor. So, Speaker, get ready. It's going to be a long day.

Mr Kormos: What time are you going to be on?

Ms Martel: I don't even know when I'm going to be on, but I know you're going to find out for me from the Clerk during the course of this debate, and I'll let people know that.

Here's Mr Bisson. He should know that I'm, oh, so happy to be taking his spot for the next 20 minutes to do this for him, but he's going to take my hour leadoff on the bill with respect to the Provincial Auditor.

Let me start by saying this: This is a government priority? Bill 96 is a government priority? We are here, spending precious legislative time, dealing with this bill, in light of all the other important priorities that are facing Ontarians? Speaker, does this make any sense to you?

Here are people who are so very concerned about the fact that on November 1 this Liberal government is cutting off their access to chiropractors, cutting off their access to eye exams and cutting off their access to physiotherapists. These are important health care services—for many they are essential health care services—that this government has delisted through its budget process.

I would remind you that this was done by this Liberal government after Mr McGuinty promised, before the election and during the election, that he would not cut health care services. Now people find themselves having to deal with services that have essentially been privatized, because the government is not covering any portion of the costs now. These people are going to have to pay out of their pocket for services right now that are partially or fully covered through the OHIP schedule of benefits.

It's interesting. I don't have the letter with me, but I will paraphrase: Not only did Mr McGuinty say he wasn't going to cut access to essential health care services like these ones, but he also was very critical of the health care premium or tax, depending on what day of the week it is and what arbitrator is dealing with this matter. He wasn't also going to put in a new health care premium, because people would have to pay for health care services three times if the Liberal government did that: They would pay through general taxes, they would pay through a new health tax or premium and they would pay one more time for health care services out of their own pocket.

He was critical of the Conservatives, because that was an idea that was floated during the Conservative leadership race in 2002 by Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell. Well, here we are—because the House is also seized of the matter of the health care premium, which I have spoken to—and what Mr McGuinty promised he would not do is exactly what the Liberal government is doing. It is true that people are going to pay not once, not twice, but three times for health care, just like he predicted, and they are going to pay a whole lot.

At the end of this week—actually, starting November 1—people are going to pay for chiropractic services, eye exams and physiotherapy services. If you don't think that's going to cause a barrier to any number of people who are on low incomes, to any number of seniors who have fixed incomes, you need to think again, because of course it will. These folks don't have that kind of money to get access to these kinds of essential services. That's a priority. I don't see the bill that's dealing with that particular issue, and that's happening at the end of this week. Not only is it a priority, but it's really timely in terms of what the government is doing and when these negative changes are going to come to pass.

Look at hydro. As a result of this government breaking its promise on the rate cap and not continuing it in place till 2006, like they promised before the election and during the election, there are people in my riding who are, of course, paying more now for their hydro. In fact, they're going to pay a whole lot more if their jobs are lost as a result of this government's Bill 100, which very much is going to sock it to the major industrial users of electricity in this province, like Falconbridge and others who came to the hearings on this particular bill and made it very clear that, if passed, we should expect a 30% to 52% increase in hydro rates, which would cost the economy or the province of Ontario about 140,000 jobs, primarily concentrated in the manufacturing sector in steel, forestry and mining.

I've got to tell you that many communities in northern Ontario are single-industry towns and depend on those very industries for their employment. If that sawmill goes down, that pulp and paper mill goes down, that mine development doesn't occur, the smelter goes down, the mine goes down, the steel mill goes down, well, there isn't much left in the community after all that happens.

I spoke to that bill as well, but let me raise it again. That should be a priority for members in this House.

There should be Liberal members, during the debate on Bill 100, who are on their feet and saying, "I'm worried about Ontario's economy." I worry when some of the major consumers of power—not friends of the NDP, I remind you—come to the committee on Bill 100 and say that we can expect an increase of 53% in hydro and a loss of 140,000 jobs. I'm waiting to hear some of those Liberal members get up and speak to that matter and say, "Perhaps we shouldn't be moving forward with a bill that's going to have that kind of negative impact on our communities."

That's a priority, and I don't know why we're not speaking to that. I don't know why the government brings this bill about bringing your own wine, your own spirits, when there are so many pressing issues that really are going to affect people's wallets with respect to the cuts to essential health care services, or their jobs. But this appears to be the government priority of the day. I think it has more to do with trying to deflect people's attention away from all of the broken promises and all of the other cuts than anything else.

1700

There was no consultation with respect to this bill with a very important group like MADD. I have lots of time and lots of respect for all of those people involved in this organization, some of whom are involved in the organization because they have suffered very dramatic, very tragic accidents in their own families as a result of drunk drivers on the road who have seriously maimed their family members or, indeed, even killed their family members.

MADD has a very important perspective about this bill. If they had been consulted by this government before the government brought in the legislation, I'll bet MADD would have said to the government, "This is absolutely the wrong direction to go in. We are not supportive of this legislation." But it's clear that the government, for some reason, didn't have time, or maybe didn't want to talk to this important group that has contributed greatly to programs to deal with drunk driving, that has supported major public education programs aimed at young people in particular, for example, to talk to them very seriously about not drinking and driving. I would have thought the government would want the perspective from MADD before they came forward with this bill. But the government didn't find the time to consult with them, and that is why we need full public hearings on this bill, so their voice might actually be heard, because it hasn't been heard to date with respect to this bill or what has happened since the bill was introduced by the minister.

From my perspective, restaurants—and I could stand to be corrected, but I don't think so—make a good chunk of their money through their wine and spirits sales. There might be a markup of 3% or 4% on food, but the really big markup, the one that is going to make it or break it for many restaurateurs and the staff they employ, centres on spirits, the sale of them and the markup on them. I know that the association, through Mr Seiling, has come forward and said that people are in favour of this. I have

to tell you that in my part of the world, there are a lot of restaurant owners who are not very terribly excited about this bill at all because they are very worried about what it's going to mean to their bottom line, what it's going to mean to their ability to be viable, what it's going to mean, for example, to their ability to continue to hire and keep their staff. They know that if there is a major change—a major drop-off is the better way to describe it—in sales of spirits and wines in their restaurants, that is going to have a significant impact on their ability to operate, on their ability to hang on to their staff.

That's probably why the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce wrote to Minister Watson on August 9. They were good enough to send a copy to myself, as one of the local members, and a copy to Rick Bartolucci, who's the MPP for Sudbury.

"Re: Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004.

"Dear Sir:

"The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce represents over 800 businesses in the greater Sudbury area. Recently, we were approached by a group of chamber members concerned about the proposed changes to the Liquor Licence Act which would allow patrons to bring their own wine to a restaurant"—probably some of the same owners who are members of the chamber, who have made comments to me about this bill as well.

Here's what they said:

"These restaurant owners are concerned with this legislation and do not support it for the following reasons:

"The liability of restaurant and bar owners and related insurance costs are already onerous. Patrons bringing in and consuming their own wines raises questions of liability that the government and insurance companies have not fully answered. A full explanation of how this change to legislation will impact the exposure of restaurant owners and the potential increase in insurance costs is required for these businesses to have an understanding of how they will be affected by this initiative."

I suspect that the government doesn't even have an idea of what the exposure will be for restaurant owners. I suspect that the government hasn't even had a discussion with the insurance industry about what the potential increase might be for some of these restaurant owners who are concerned about liability. If the government had such a cost-benefit analysis, it would be great if the government would indicate that during the course of this debate, and better yet, actually release it. One would hope that in advance of bringing forward this legislation, they would have raised those questions and done the work that needed to be done to ensure that insurance companies weren't going to gouge restaurant owners more than they're already gouging them, drivers and homeowners in Ontario, and that the government would have a full idea of what the liability was going to be and what that would mean in financial terms for restaurant owners. If the government has such a study—and they should have done some work before bringing this forward—then I'd ask them to table it now. And if the gov-

ernment doesn't have it, they'd better get it done before this bill goes to full public hearings, so those very legitimate questions can be answered.

Second concern: "It is the opinion of these restaurant owners that the 'bring your own wine' plan will not result in increased meal sales in their establishments but rather a decrease in wine sales. The resultant loss of profits could only end in reduced employment." That's the point I raised earlier, in terms of some of the concerns that owners were raising with me. I said it before and I'll it again: The money to be made is not really on food; it's on the sale of spirits at these restaurants. I wonder if the government has done any impact analysis as a result to determine what the financial loss in fact is going to be when patrons are allowed to bring their own spirits in and restaurant owners as a result aren't able to count on that in terms of income. I wonder if the government has done any work on the potential impact in terms of waiters, waitresses, kitchen staff, bar staff and everybody else who might be affected as a result of this bill. The government should have done that homework, and if the government has, it would be a really good idea if they could table it now.

This is the chamber of commerce that wrote this letter, not me. The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce is raising concerns from their own members about what the impact on businesses and their own employees will be.

Here's the third problem: "Inventory management for a restaurant's wine cellar would become extremely difficult when the owner would not know whether patrons would be buying wine or supplying their own." That's an important point. How are you supposed to stock up if you don't know what people are going to bring with them or what they're going to decide to continue to buy when they're on your premises? It's probably hard enough for restaurant owners to be making important decisions—again, related to funding about what they're stocking, how much volume and what kind—if they're dealing with even more uncertainty about what's going to happen when people can bring their own spirits into their establishments.

Fourth problem: "Restaurant owners already have strict compliance and reporting requirements. This initiative would likely result in even more paperwork, equipment and reporting, none of which would serve to increase a restaurant's profitability"—not to mention the concern around increased insurance rates, which is probably a very significant and legitimate concern that restaurant owners have. These folks are doing enough trying to deal with the paperwork that's coming forward. What is the anticipated increase with respect to paperwork that the government envisions with this new initiative? If the government has information on that, maybe they should share it too.

Finally: "The government has not provided sufficient reasons for changing the legislation to include the 'bring your own wine' idea. Restaurant owners want to know why the change is being made and who is behind the promotion of this idea." That's very true. I've got to tell

you there's been no one calling our office, banging down the door at my constituency office, to say, "Tell the government to bring forward legislation on bring your own wine to the restaurant"—not a person. In fact, the only information I've received has been from the chamber of commerce, not usually terribly supportive of the NDP, saying this is a really bad idea. What are you going forward with this for?

1710

I have not had a single constituent, either before this legislation was introduced or since, who has called my office and said, "My goodness, this is a priority for me. Bring it on. This is so important for me and my family. Bring it on." Not one. In fact, the only letter is from the chamber of commerce, representing over 800 businesses in the community, which says that a group of chamber members is concerned about the changes and wants to know why you're doing this and who is behind the promotion of this idea.

I'd like to know who is behind the promotion of this idea too. As I said earlier, in the grand scheme of things affecting Ontario families at this point in time, I can hardly see this as a priority. In fact, for many of those people who work in the restaurant industry right now, especially many of the waiters and waitresses and bar staff and others who will do much better on a 15% tip on a bottle of wine than they will on a \$5 corkage fee, they are probably pretty concerned about who is behind this, who is peddling this idea for the ministry right now and why this seems to be so important to the government when there are so many other things that should be important, like increasing the minimum wage for some of those very workers to a liveable minimum wage, one that might actually allow some of these people to pay their rent. It is really hard to imagine that the few coins, the few pennies that this government increased the minimum wage by do anything to make up for the eight years of the freeze on the minimum wage imposed by the Tories. You and I know, Speaker, that the cost of electricity and the cost of the phone and the rent that you have to pay for your apartment and the cost of food have increased by far, far more than the government is currently giving back in terms of the few cents by which they have raised the minimum wage.

In conclusion, if the minister wants a priority to deal with in his office, he should deal with birth certificates. Do you know what, Speaker? In my office right now, our volume of caseload with respect to birth certificates is the same as the volume of case work with respect to the Family Responsibility Office. That's a disaster. It is an absolute disaster. I have to tell you, there has been no significant, important, positive change in dealing with birth certificates in the whole year that this minister has been minister of this particular ministry. So if he really wants to deal with a priority in his ministry, something that would make a difference for Ontarians, he should get to the matter of dealing with the birth certificate situation, because that will have a far more positive impact on families and people in the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to rise to respond to the comments from the member for Nickel Belt and to speak in support of Bill 96.

This is really a very simple bill. What it proposes to do, if passed, is allow consumers who are going to the restaurant to bring their own bottle of wine. It also allows them, if they don't drink that whole bottle of wine, to take it home again, so there is no need to rush through that bottle of wine and make sure you finish it all off. Now, we're not suggesting that you're going to walk out on to the road with an uncorked bottle of wine and get into your car. In fact, the law would require the restaurateur to properly recork the bottle and seal it up again, so this would be quite safe.

This is a very simple bill, and it is voluntary. Nobody is saying to a restaurant, "You must do this." Nobody is saying to a consumer, "You must do this." It is voluntary on the part of both the restaurateur to allow it and the consumer to choose to participate or not. It's voluntary. It's simple.

Contrary to what the opposition keeps telling you, Minister Watson, the minister responsible, has met with them way back in March. Now, perhaps they've forgotten, but he did meet with MADD back in March. In fact, this whole idea for legislation arose out of a Liquor Licence Act advisory group that was advising the former Conservative minister and that actually included a Conservative member who was doing the advising—and MADD, I might note.

Minister, the one thing I do agree with the member for Nickel Belt about is that this is not the most important thing we should discuss. We would be delighted to pass this bill and get on with discussing something else.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I was listening very attentively to the member from Nickel Belt regarding Bill 96 and some of the other concerns.

There were a lot of issues, in regarding this bill, such as open bottles and what happens in the new vehicles that are out there, transporting an open or a partially open bottle in a vehicle such as one of the new SUVs and so on. How is it going to be affected, and the responsibility of the restaurants?

I met with restaurants about this bill, and they had some strong concerns about that. Mr O'Toole mentioned Fazio's, which is a restaurant in my riding. They are very proud of their wine expertise. He has over 13,000 bottles of wine in his wine cellar. How is he going to be affected? When you take into consideration the things that have impacted the restaurant industry, whether it's SARS or, locally, we heard a lot of concerns regarding smoking. Whichever side of that issue you're on, it still removed individuals from that.

Quite effectively, there may be a time frame when the restaurants recoup, but there's going to be another hit that they're taking—at least that they believe they're taking—when this takes place, and they're concerned about that impact. Quite frankly, when you have 13,000 bottles of

wine in your cellar, how are you going to be able to retail that when people are bringing their own?

Also, what's the impact regarding policing and watching these sorts of things and how it's going to be regulated? How much time? We constantly hear about the fact that we don't have enough police to take care of the situations that are out there currently. Not only that, what about other jurisdictions? Should we not have looked at what's taken place there, as opposed to this?

Locally, I can remember that some officers whom I skate with on a regular basis when I get a chance were talking about a couple of individuals who were having a picnic down at Lakeview Park in Oshawa and had a bottle of wine at the picnic. They came up and were shaking the hands of police officers.

The young officer says, "Well, we've got to charge them now." Another says, "No, you don't understand. They must be from Quebec. Come on." So they went over and talked to them and, sure enough, they were from Quebec. Are there not other ways that we could look at, without directly or indirectly possibly impacting the restaurateurs and their concern, and still move forward in helping the wine industry?

Mr Kormos: It is always a pleasure—always—to hear the member from Nickel Belt speak, quite frankly, to any bill that might come before this House. There is not a member of this chamber who is better prepared and more capable on her feet—or his feet—indeed, harder-working than the member from Nickel Belt. You saw how she came in and basically took over duty from her colleague who was unable to be here in time and presented not just a thorough analysis of the bill but an entertaining and enlightening narration of circumstances that should compel us to examine this bill carefully.

I do take quarrel with the people who insist that the bill addresses the ability to take a half-empty bottle home with you. You see, my friends, if you read the bill, there is no mention of that whatsoever. There's nothing in the bill that provides for taking it home. Take a look at the bill. It's not long. I mean, put your crayons down for just a second. It's a page and a half. The bill is very short. There is nothing in the bill that speaks to taking a half-empty bottle of wine or any other beverage home.

So let's start from the same starting point at least in terms of what the bill is that we're debating. Indeed, this bill cries out for public hearings. Liberal backbenchers reading the scripts, referring to their Coles notes, referring to the cheat sheets, insist that the bill is but the most modest of proposals. Well, if it is, then they should have no hesitation in supporting the opposition demands that it go to broad-based, province-wide public hearings. I say that there are people out there—waiters and waitresses, restaurateurs, big-city and small-town, among others—who deserve to be heard.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): You know, living in Ottawa—an hour and a half from the east end of Ottawa anyway and an hour and a half to Montreal—this has been something that we've been able to do if we go to Montreal for many years. It's a civilized thing to be

able to bring your own bottle of wine to a restaurant. There was broad consultation by the minister on this. There was broad acceptance. Only a few restaurants will pick this up, but the ones that do will have a different experience for people. If people want to take an expensive bottle of wine to the restaurant and enjoy the good food at the restaurant, this is going to make the whole restaurant industry better.

I think, as well, that vintners must want to see more expensive wines bought. So if you're going to the restaurant now, because they have the storage costs, because they have the overhead costs, the wine may cost you two and a half times as much. With the corking fee, we're going to have the good wines at a much better price.

1720

I believe that this will improve things for the vintners, improve things for the restaurants and certainly improve the experience for the restaurant-goers—those who wish to choose it. It is not going to be mandatory.

It will be an excellent way of improving the tourism industry, which so many people depend on. It's been around in Montreal for years.

I remember, as a student studying in England, I had the chance to go to Venice. There were four of us who went to a restaurant. I'm not sure what the law was then in Venice, but we were able to send one person out when we ran out of wine to buy wine at the corner store and bring it into the restaurant. It is not quite that experience—maybe that's what students would do—but this is going to be great for the wine producers, for the restaurant industry and for the patrons.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: Let's go back to this letter from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Here is the key line: "Restaurant owners want to know why the change is being made and who is behind the promotion of this idea." That is a question the government should raise, because what has happened in our community is that restaurant owners have gone to the chamber and said, "We're really concerned. We don't support this legislation." So who does?

They don't support it because they're worried about liability and they are worried that this is going to increase insurance costs. I bet for any number of these people, the insurance that they are already trying to deal with is already too onerous and already too high, never mind their insurance for automobiles and their home insurance. These questions about liability, these questions about added insurance costs, haven't been answered. What's going to be their exposure? More importantly, what are going to be their costs?

Secondly, they are really concerned this is going to do nothing to increase the profitability of their restaurants. On the contrary, it's going to do a lot to decrease their profitability and put their staff at risk, because their making money is really dependent on the sale of wine and spirits, and if those sales are poor, that affects the

bottom line. Of course, that's going to affect the staff and the ability of staff to even have hours to work.

Thirdly, they're really worried as well about the reporting requirements the ministry is now going to impose, when they already have to deal with a great deal of paperwork, and the fact that it is going to be difficult for them just to try to deal with their inventory. They already do a lot of work trying to sort out what brands, volumes and how much to stock. When they have no clear idea of what people are going to bring in, how much more difficult is that going to be?

The fact of the matter is, restaurant owners in my community think this idea is dumb, are not supportive and want to know who is behind peddling this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to make some comments on Bill 96, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act. I'll be sharing my time with my good friend the member from Markham.

I just want to let the good folks of my riding of Peterborough know that about two weeks ago we had a meeting in Peterborough and Minister Watson was there. It was the monthly breakfast meeting for the downtown Peterborough BIA, and I would like to get on the record that my good friend Walter Johnstone, who is the general manager of the business improvement area for downtown Peterborough, was there, as was my good friend Mo Cox, who is the chairman of the downtown BIA.

Just to let you know, Morris Cox, or Mo as he's known in Peterborough, owns Brant Office Supply in downtown Peterborough. Most communities in Ontario now face a lot of competition from the big box stores. Here's a guy who invested to upgrade his store in downtown Peterborough by, I don't know, three quarters of a million dollars, and in fact he's been able to challenge Business Depot and Staples in Peterborough. I commend Mo Cox for his innovative strategies in order to secure market share.

But at this breakfast meeting, we had, as I said, Walter Johnstone. Walter is also the chair of the local children's aid society in Peterborough, and when he's not doing his great work with the downtown BIA, he's spending his time with the local children's aid society. If Walter happens to be watching this evening, I just want to commend him for his good work in his volunteer capacity as chairman of the children's aid society.

Also, a director of the downtown Peterborough BIA is a gentleman by the name of Dean Pappas. Dean, along with his family, operates Pappas billiard hall, which has been in business in Peterborough for some 100 years. They're one of the great Greek families in Peterborough. We know that the Greek heritage is just terrific for the citizens of Peterborough. Dean and his family organize the annual Greek night once a year in Peterborough. I've had the pleasure, first as a member of council and secondly, as an MPP, to attend the Greek festival in Peterborough.

There was some question about where this bill came from. I want to hearken back to the 1985 provincial

election. Part of the David Peterson platform of that campaign was "beer at your local corner stores."

Mr Hudak: Did he break that promise?

Mr Leal: No, he didn't. I want to say to my friend from Erie-Lincoln that he would recall that was a minority Parliament. Premier Peterson brought the legislation forward. It was deemed a question of non-confidence, actually, and the bill got defeated in the minority Parliament of 1985-87.

Mr McMeekin: Democracy at work.

Mr Leal: Democracy at work. Thanks.

Out of that initiative, there was the whole question about accessibility of beverage alcohol in the province of Ontario. My friend from Erie-Lincoln was a member of the Harris-Eves government, of course. One of the ways they got around beer in the local corner store was they brought in agency stores across the province of Ontario. In fact, Mr Speaker, you probably have agency stores in your riding. In effect, they really serve as beer at your local corner store, because a local merchant operates them. I know that there's one in Keene, Ontario. I believe there's one in Norwood too. The Minister of Agriculture was with me in Norwood just recently. The good citizens of those areas can come and buy beer and beverage alcohol at those local stores. In fact, it's a real boon to tourism and the economy. There's a long history in Ontario of relaxing the liquor laws to make it more accessible in a controlled environment.

I do want to get on the record of the safety issue. During my 18 years on Peterborough city council, I actually—

Mr Yakabuski: That's where you made all those good friends.

Mr Leal: Member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, that's right; I made a lot of good friends during my 18 years on council.

By the way, I must say that the mayor of Peterborough—I'll get this on the record—Sylvia Sutherland, was just delighted last Friday when we announced the gas tax for Peterborough Transit. In fact, the city of Peterborough gets some three quarters of a million dollars of new money for transit in Peterborough. As I said to the press in Peterborough, "Promise made, commitment kept," among a whole range of commitments made and commitments kept.

What I hear from the good folks in my riding is, "Jeff, every day we hear from you another measure of your platform that, 'Promise made, commitment kept,'" and we're right on schedule.

Interjections.

Mr Leal: I hear some comments opposite. I have to say again that the response from the province after the devastating flood we had on July 15 continues. The Premier was there the day after the flood; the ministers came in.

Mr McMeekin: How quick did they get the money?

Mr Leal: Right away, my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. When we had a similar flood in 2002, I was on council. We had to wait nine

months before we got a nickel from the province of Ontario.

1730

Mr McMeekin: Shame.

Mr Leal: Shameful.

Let me get back to this bill. When I was on council, I was council's representative for an organization in Peterborough called PAID, Peterborough Against Impaired Driving. That group was sponsored by a lady I know very well, Lily Rosebush. Lily had the very tragic experience of her son being killed by a drunk driver many years ago. She thought, as part of the legacy of her son, that she would become involved in the city of Peterborough to start an education program to make Peterborough safe from drunk drivers being on our streets. Lily did an enormous job to found that committee. I had the opportunity to work with Lily for many years in my capacity as council's representative on that group.

That leads me to the part of this bill that I think is so important: strengthened enforcement and increased public safety. On one hand, I believe, if you're going to make the liquor laws of the province of Ontario more progressive, on the other hand we've got to make sure that there's an increased element of enforcement and public safety.

I just want to read a couple of things into the record as part of this bill. Number one: allow the registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission to suspend immediately a liquor licence if it's necessary in the public interest. This would allow the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to move quickly in situations where public safety is in danger.

Mr McMeekin: I support that.

Mr Leal: I think everybody supports that. Everybody should support that.

This change would allow for faster and more effective response to public safety issues as they arise in relation to the licensed establishment and make the Liquor Licence Act consistent with the Gaming Control Act, which authorizes the registrar to issue immediate suspensions. An immediate suspension of a liquor licence by the registrar in this proposal would be followed within 15 days by a full hearing by the board of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission to adjudicate the allegations and to consider the continuation of the suspension upon the completion of the hearing process.

Second, the amendments propose to create an offence for failing to leave a premise when required by a police officer or for returning the same day, unless permitted by a police officer. This change would assist police officers in dealing with disruptive situations that require the clearing of a licensed establishment.

Third, the amendments propose to double the minimum fines for offences involving liquor and underage persons. The increased fines will provide a more effective deterrent for the sale and service of alcoholic beverages to minors.

That's a key part of this legislation. All of us, on all sides of the House here, are concerned with minors

getting into drinking establishments and being there. What I like about this bill, as part of it, is the strengthening of both enforcement and increased public safety, really cracking down on licensees who violate the terms of their licence and cracking down on minors. I think these are very good things that all of us, on all sides of the House, should support.

I had the opportunity to be in the Niagara area some years ago. I had the opportunity to tour Pillitteri Estates Winery, operated by the former very distinguished member of the House of Commons, Gary Pillitteri from Niagara Falls. It was an opportunity for me to get first-hand knowledge of the wine industry in Ontario. Anything we can do through the VQA process to give increased markets for many of our local wine manufacturers, indeed, is a very good thing to do. We would encourage that all members of the House should be supporting that.

Also, this past Friday, I had the opportunity to be in the riding of my friend from Durham, Mr O'Toole. It was an opportunity for me to be there and to talk about the Ocala wine operation that's in his riding. I did get the opportunity, even though I'm not a wine drinker myself, to take a couple of bottles of that vintage to bring home to Peterborough as a way of supporting that local industry that's so close to Peterborough.

Mr McMeekin: Well, somebody had to do it.

Mr Leal: That's right. I thank my friend.

The safety aspect of this legislation is so important. I think there may be some who perhaps are overlooking that part of the legislation. I want to go back to when Minister Watson met with the BIA in Peterborough. There were a number of hotel and restaurant owners there that morning and they were asking Minister Watson some of the questions that have been posed by the members of the opposition here today. Minister Watson certainly reassured them as to how this legislation will operate, how restaurant owners or bar owners will be able to purchase a \$15 machine that will allow people to re-cap a portion of their favourite wine that they brought into the restaurant and take it home with them, locked in the trunk of their cars.

I think, by and large, there are a lot of positive aspects to this legislation. We're entering a dialogue and we hope, as it moves forward, we'll hear comments from all sides. At the end of the day, we want a piece of legislation that is going to work.

Now, I'll allow my friend from Markham.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): It certainly is a great pleasure to participate in the debate on Bill 96. I will begin by reminding members of the opposition parties that this bill is only the first step in a strategy to modernize Ontario's outdated liquor laws. Our government is doing the responsible thing in proposing these changes to bring our liquor laws into the 21st century.

I said that these laws were outdated because, as many of us know, the Liquor Licence Act was enacted in 1944. There have been a number of changes over the years, but the very last significant changes were made in 1990,

some 14 years ago. I want to say that these changes are made to the act to enhance the economic opportunities available to the hospitality sector, as well as to strengthen requirements for the responsible sale and service of liquor.

With respect to the economic development aspect, my colleague the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has shared with us the success story of Quebec. If I have time, I'll talk about that a bit more. But I also want to say that this is important because the proposed amendments are the first phase of a broad initiative to review the Liquor Licence Act: to improve consumer choice, to reduce administrative burdens for small businesses and to increase public safety.

In the very near future, our government will be consulting with the public and various stakeholders on reforms to further strengthen enforcement tools, improve consumer choice and reduce administrative burdens on businesses. Phase 2 will take a broader look at modernizing the Liquor Licence Act in support of stronger public safety and simpler rules for licensees.

I want to talk about consumer choice at this time. Our government is proposing to amend the Liquor Licence Act and regulations. Yes, the member from Niagara Centre was correct: that is not in the bill itself. These changes are going to be implemented through regulations. That is to permit patrons to bring commercially made and unopened wine into a licensed restaurant.

As has been pointed out, this is absolutely voluntary. There is no mandatory requirement to force any establishment to do anything. In fact, they have to apply for an endorsement from the ministry to obtain permission to do that.

We also know that bring your own wine is already available in Quebec, Alberta and New Brunswick, as well as in Australia and several US states, including New York.

I want to talk a bit about what this means to my own riding of Markham. The town of Markham, which is part of my riding, is extremely famous, in my view, for its restaurants. If members from the opposition party don't believe me, check with your colleague the member from Oak Ridges. He has come into many of the Markham restaurants, including one that is world-renowned on Main Street in Unionville. Of course I'm referring to Il Postino. I'm referring to Blacksmith's Bistro, Jakes and many others. There are also quite a number of very distinguished Chinese restaurants, and I refer to the Dynasty and La Rosa, close to Woodbine. As I said, the member from Oak Ridges has attended a number of events with me, and I think he will echo my comments.

1740

Almost all of these restaurants are licensed, and I've never received any complaint while discussing Bill 96. I think some of them do not intend to apply for that endorsement—and that's fine; this is totally voluntary, as we've said—and some actually feel it would be beneficial to them.

That's where the Quebec experience comes in, because some restaurants will be able to increase their

business by allowing patrons to bring into the restaurant, the establishment, the customers' pick. The member from Stoney Creek emphasized how important it is for patrons to be able to bring into restaurants their own pick, because some of these restaurants either do not have the resources or the desire to stock these special brands. I can certainly echo that, because I have been to China and I know that a number of Chinese wines have been imported into this province. I have been to a number of the restaurants in Markham—and I'm sure this experience will be similar in restaurants throughout the province—and not too many of the Chinese imports have been stocked by them, and maybe rightly so. It would be extremely difficult for them to be able to enjoy their own wine with a meal they choose to have, at whichever establishment.

Of course we support Ontario wines, but this is a free country. We support Ontario wines as much as we support freedom of choice. We understand that we're not going to be compelling or imposing on our residents, "Hey, you have to have wine from Niagara Falls, and you must enjoy Ontario wine." We encourage them, but we also allow them and encourage them to take their own pick and bring it with them to the establishment of their choice. This is precisely the point.

We talk about diversity. My riding of Markham is one of the most diverse ridings in this province, and we should be able to practise what we preach. We must be able to do what we have always believed in, and that is that diversity does not only belong to this House; diversity belongs to restaurants, it belongs to recreation centres; it belongs everywhere in our province. That is why I fully support Bill 96, and I encourage all members to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to re-enter the debate upon my colleague's comments. The member from Peterborough was close, at thirteen and a half minutes or so. He could have talked a bit more about his visits to Niagara and other wineries to kill the time. The problem was—and I enjoyed your speech—you limited Markham's comments to only about five and a half minutes. I think we all know the rules of the House: Each member of the government side would be allowed a minimum of 20 minutes. I hope they do that as the debate progresses this evening and take their maximum time, because they certainly are not doing so.

I made my comments about some of the details of Bill 96 and, if the minister has the duster out and is dusting off some policies, the importance of dusting off the VQA Wine Stores Act, the Ontario wine store legislation. I think that would be a great benefit for our local industries.

But I'll put out the challenge, too, in the debate. Tell me what the government has done to support the hospitality industry, because, as I mentioned, there has been a whole lot that has been done that is impacting quite negatively on the hospitality industry. I know the minister's staff pushed against this. It's not their idea. It's

coming down from the Premier's office, no doubt, and the Minister of Finance's office. But you have to admit that the significant tax increases on businesses, on individuals, the increase in hydro rates, the increase in labour costs, the increase in the price of beer, and finally the gladly aborted attempt to bring in the so-called McGuinty soup-and-salad tax, among other initiatives, have had a punishing impact on the hospitality industry.

I ask members opposite to tell me what the next stage of the plan is, aside from some liquor licensing reform—some major changes on the financial side, the hydro side perhaps, that are going to help that industry, because you've put them downhill significantly.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I listened intently, but part of my problem with this bill is that on the surface of it, most people sitting out there would say, "What does it mean?" Not a big deal. Somebody gets to bring their bottle of wine into a restaurant, and I guess some people, on balance, might think it's a good thing.

What I've found that's interesting in the debate, at least in my home constituency—it may not be the same for other members—is that I raise it at some of the coffee shops as I drop around to different parts of the riding. I say to people, "What do you think of bring your own wine?" Interesting. In Fauquier last weekend, in Opasatika the weekend before, the same comment was raised both times, and it was, "Why is the government doing this? Who's asking for it? What is this going to do for me? Who cares?" That's the response I'm getting from people. So I guess the first point is, why are you doing this? I know there is more important legislation we could be debating, but we're doing this bring your own wine.

The other thing is that it raises a number of interesting points. Number one, currently, as it is right now, if you order a bottle of wine in a restaurant and they're licensed, the waiter controls the wine. If the waiter says, "That table is a bit intoxicated; I'm not bringing them another bottle of wine," it's pretty easy to control.

You, as a patron, walk into that same restaurant and you have three bottles of wine. You say to the waiter, "Open our bottles of wine," so they open the bottles of wine. They figure maybe the whole table is drinking, but it turns out there are only a couple of wine drinkers. Now all of a sudden that poor waiter has a table that's intoxicated. How do they deal with that? One of the controls we currently have is that it's the waiter who controls the wine being brought to the table. In this particular scenario, he won't do that.

But here's the kicker. What happens if somebody from that table leaves intoxicated and gets involved in a motor vehicle accident? What's going to happen to the owner? At the end of the day, they are going to say the owner is responsible for the person leaving their establishment intoxicated.

I hear what the government is trying to do here, but this thing is fraught with problems. I really believe this bill has to go to committee to try to deal with some of those issues, not to say what it means to the Ontario wine

industry, which I'll speak to when I get an opportunity in debate to talk about that particular part of the bill.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 96. I find it interesting that the third party has one member who considers this frivolous, another who considers that we don't know why we're doing it, and a third who is demanding that we have public hearings. I know there is logic in there somewhere, but it defeats me.

I know the reason the former minister of consumerism from Erie-Lincoln is so supportive is because, as minister of consumerism, he actually supported the recommendations that this bill falls out of, and those are the recommendations from the Liquor Licence Act advisory board. I know Mr Miller also was a part of that particular advisory board, along with a number of other individuals. When you think about it, there isn't a great deal of reason to continue to debate something that so many people actually support. That was done back in 2002, I think. It went from, if I recall, September to November, in the discussions that I had read.

The other thing I find fascinating is that it seems that other parts of the world can cope with this type of legislation, but not in Ontario, which is really quite fascinating for me. As you've heard, there are not only a number of places in Europe, but I can tell you that even in South Africa, in fact, you can take your own wine to dinner. It hasn't induced a lot of difficulties in that country as pertaining to the use of wine. It certainly hasn't in a number of the other countries that I have been fortunate enough to visit. It seems to me that even in our own country, in Quebec, you can manage to take your own wine, but for some unknown reason—is it something that we just simply believe Ontarians are not capable of handling? Of course, I happen to think that Ontarians are quite capable of handling things that are not all that unique and different and are very much part of what they want their culture to be in our, as we know, absolutely wonderful, multicultural city.

Mr O'Toole: I enjoyed the comments from the members from Peterborough and Markham. They do raise some good points. But I think the member from Erie-Lincoln, who was strategic in most of this bill coming forward when he was the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, needs to be on the record.

1750

I think I've heard members talking here informally that one of the first steps might be to implement a pilot project, which might be helpful. I'm going to turn this into sort of an amendment on the floor on VQAO, the vintners' quality assurance, which is Ontario wine of the highest quality. It might be a good plan that you can bring your own Ontario wine. Then we're helping jobs in Ontario while we're promoting Ontario wines. Many fine restaurants today only serve the very snobbish European and other countries' wines. This is not partisan. This is meant as a most sincere thing.

That being said, I know of which I speak here at the moment. I want to put a couple of personal things on the

record, as I usually do. The largest selling wine by the LCBO is Wolf Blass, an Australian wine. It's the largest selling wine in our LCBOs. I want to ask this question: Why, when we're on the one hand encouraging the Minister of Economic Development to promote Ontario wines and export—I know that when Bob Runciman was the minister he did a lot to make sure that got on the record. But for the record, so I'm not in any way diminishing or in a conflict of interest here, my daughter Rochelle is the key account representative for a company called Maxxium. Their main product is Wolf Blass. This very night, as we speak, it's her 26th birthday. I want to wish her a happy birthday. She's at a reception hosted by Wolf Blass. So there you go.

The Deputy Speaker: Happy birthday and thank you.

The member for Peterborough has two minutes to reply.

Mr Leal: I want to thank the members from Markham, Erie-Lincoln, Timmins-James Bay, Etobicoke Centre and my good friend from Durham. I would also like to wish his daughter a happy birthday. I know the member for Durham has a lot of family members in Peterborough and they would join me in wishing the member from Durham's daughter a very happy birthday.

In my two-minute wrap-up, I just want to mention a couple of things. There was a very interesting quote from Tim Hudak, the member from Erie-Lincoln, MPP for the area, in the Niagara Falls Review of March 9, 2004: "I am in favour of bring your own. Let's look at best practices. I think it's good for customers, good for tourism. It was always my feeling as a consumer minister that we have to allow tourism operators to be innovative in order to compete with other locations." Isn't that an amazing amount of insight?

There are several other jurisdictions that have embarked along a similar path. I'm looking at New Brunswick, Quebec and Alberta. My goodness gracious—Alberta; that great progressive in Alberta, Ralph Klein. Can you imagine that great progressive thinker Ralph Klein bringing this kind of legislation to the people of Alberta? I would think that my friends opposite, who I take it have great respect and admiration for Premier Klein, would fall in lockstep and support this legislation.

I'm also told that several states in the United States have brought forward—I'd have to have research check, but maybe that famous governor from Texas, now President George Bush, brought in this kind of legislation. I know how these people opposite love George Bush.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Yakabuski: It's a tough act to follow, that member from Peterborough.

We're talking about Bill 96, bring your own wine. I've got to tell you that I don't have a great deal of difficulty with this bill. What I have a great deal of difficulty with is the approach of the party and the ministry bringing this bill forward to the Legislature at this time. For goodness' sake, there must be a higher priority at this time in Ontario than bringing your own wine to a licensed restaurant. There is nothing driving this from the consumer or the business perspective.

So what is this about? This is all about deflection of the deception. Deflection of the deception is what it's all about. You see, the government is under a great deal of pressure because they have been bringing in legislation that raises hydro rates, that brings in a health care tax—broken promise after broken promise. You know, someone said to me the other day that it is now official Liberal Party policy: “We have never seen a promise we couldn't break.”

Getting back to Bill 96, what seems to be the rush to get this done while there are so many other priorities? I'm going to talk a bit about higher provincial priorities, but I would also like to talk in the time allotted to me, if I might, about some significant priorities in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that should come before bringing your bottle of wine to the restaurant to consume.

I don't have a great deal of problem with bringing that wine, but I'll tell you one thing I do really have some concerns about, and that is, why wouldn't the minister or the ministry sit down and talk to a group like Mothers Against Drunk Driving? Why would they not sit down and discuss this kind of thing? Many of these people have a history of losing children to drunk drivers. Why would they not sit down and break that ice and discuss this bill with those people?

I honestly don't believe that this bill poses a danger. I don't believe that this bill poses any kind of danger at all. I believe that there is nothing wrong with going into a restaurant and consuming a partial bottle of wine. Responsible people have it recapped under guidelines, dealt with under regulation, and they transport it safely home. I agree that that is far better than someone buying a \$40 bottle of wine and making sure they drink it all before they leave the restaurant. I think there's nothing wrong with that at all. My question is, why now? What's the hurry?

I want to talk about some priorities. What about the health care tax, which still has people in this province just riled? They are so upset about it. And where is the health care tax being spent? Today we hear that the

Minister of Tourism has an initiative, and we wonder if some of that health care tax money isn't being spent on that.

We do know one thing now. There is a saying in government, “Has the money flowed?” When will the money flow? We do know now that any time some of the money that was raised through the health care tax flows to a respective ministry, it will be flowing through sewer pipe. That we know, because that's what this government is going to be funding with that health care tax: sewer pipe. The money that flows now will be flowing through sewer pipe. That's the kinds of priorities this government has.

I want to talk a little bit about an issue in my riding: Highway 60. I've met with the minister and officials, and I'm going to tell you, that is a priority; not the wine, but Highway 60.

Interjections.

Mr Yakabuski: I am right on topic, Mr Speaker, I assure you.

Highway 60 is in dreadful condition. I doubt there are many people who have driven that highway more often than I have in the last year. It is in deplorable shape. It must be addressed, and it must be addressed soon, because the entire 75, 80 miles of that highway are going to crumble at the same time if some attention is not paid it, and soon. This is a priority. Highway 60 is a priority for people in my riding; it's a priority for me.

I've got an editorial here—it's not a prop, Mr Speaker—out of one of the great papers in my riding, the Eganville Leader, that just a couple of years ago celebrated their 100th anniversary. There is their editorial this week: Highway 60.

I'll have some time to speak more to this as the debate goes on, but I understand that the time has run out.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned, to be resumed at 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Erie-Lincoln	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Essex		Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Lundi 25 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AUDIT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 17, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor / Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to continue debate on Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor. I know it's been some time since we've dealt with this legislation. Although I'm looking forward to further debate tonight—the NDP, for example, have not had their one-hour leadoff, and I know they have a lot of information they would like to add to this debate as well—it's interesting that we're here this evening debating this bill. There are a lot of other, more important pieces of legislation that we could possibly be debating, but the government feels they'd like to move in this direction and deal with what to them is an important piece of legislation. Certainly I don't see the great importance of it. So I look forward to the debate through the rest of the evening, and I believe it's been scheduled for a couple other evenings this week as well.

We're sitting here in October of this year and we need to look at a lot of potential issues, not only in question period but during debate, dealing with a lot of the broken promises that we've seen this government come forward with. It's what we're hearing every weekend in our ridings. It's what we hear at all of the functions we attend. Quite frankly, it has become a priority of Ontarians, wondering how many more promises this government will break as we head toward the next provincial election.

Again, I look forward to the debate. I know my colleague Mr Klees will be speaking tonight; so will Mr Martiniuk. We expect some good debate and good comments and questions as we proceed through the evening.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Just a couple of comments. I guess the general gist of what we're trying to do in this bill is the right thing. I think most of us agree that the auditor has to have the kinds of tools he or she is going to need, once we finally appoint a new auditor, to do the job that is charged to that office.

One of the issues, and I know because it dates back to when I was on the public accounts committee—actually, when I first got here in the early 1990s—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's so long ago.

Mr Bisson: So long ago; I forget. But anyway, I remember having this debate about the need to give the auditor the ability to take a look at some of the transfer partners of the province because, quite frankly, a big part of the chunk of money that we vote on in this assembly for ministries by way of estimates and overall budgetary measures goes off to transfer agencies, and we need to have some kind of mechanism for us as a province to give the auditor the ability to audit those particular organizations when it comes to value-for-money audit.

It has to be said, in fairness, that hospitals and others are very responsible organizations. I know, as everybody else around this chamber does, that hospitals—for example, I've looked at the Timmins and District Hospital. They get a budget of some \$60 million or \$65 million a year. They have their own audit process at the end of the year that has to be approved. I think that in itself works, but what I guess we're trying to get at by this particular measure is to allow the auditor to look at not just how money is spent, but what kind of value we're getting for the money spent. That's all the audit does at the local level. It says, "Here's the money you've got. Here's the money you've spent. Does A equal B?" That's all it basically looks at.

Giving this kind of authority to the auditor would allow, if the public accounts committee chooses, the auditor to look at particular agencies in order to make sure we're getting good value for money on the audits. But I do believe this bill is going to have to go to committee because there are a couple of issues we need to deal with.

1850

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to rise in this House to speak in support of Bill 18, the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004. The legislation is all about accountability. In my own area, I know of one CCAC that spends about \$80 million a year and decided to develop their own case management system, when there are at least 40 other CCACs across this province. The same CCAC also opened a series of community

walk-in centres. From my knowledge of business, this just adds to overhead and confusion and takes away from the efficiency of operations.

We're proceeding now to audit that 80% of the government expenditures that weren't audited before. This is a good move, a needed move and a move that I just wonder why it happens in 2004. Performance measures can be established and indicators and comparisons with other providers can be made. This will assist us in dealing with accountability agreements, which are going to be a big part of health as we move forward in this province in trying to make us more efficient.

We have wonderful health providers in this province and we have others that need significant improvement. I hope best practices are identified by the new audits and that these best practices are promoted throughout this province.

The Auditor General would conduct discretionary, full-scope value-for-money audits of the broader public sector, excluding municipalities, and all crown-controlled corporations. If this legislation is to work and provide the oversight for the \$78 billion we spend in this province, then we must provide comparisons for performance between all of—if it's the health industry or the caregivers. Ensuring accountability and measurement of performance is the only way to bring discipline to the system.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): We're into our 20-minute debate at this point?

The Acting Speaker: No, two minutes.

Mr Klees: I'm happy to provide two minutes, just prior to entering into debate.

I didn't have the benefit of hearing the honourable member's comments in debate, but I will certainly add my comment to this bill. I don't believe there's anyone in this House who would have a concern or a problem with us bringing more transparency and accountability to how government is done, particularly the transfer partners, since I believe the number is something like 85% of all the expenditures of the province go to our transfer partners. There certainly should be a way for us to ensure that we are getting value for money for the taxpayers' dollars that are being transferred, whether it's hospitals, school boards or universities. It's with that purpose that the government has introduced this legislation. In principle, I support it.

I would like to see some amendments to this. I think the government, in its typical fashion, has seen itself as omnipotent and omniscient, that any recommendations that may have come forward from the opposition, whether it's the third party or our party, were simply shrugged off because they had made up their minds. I hope, at least in the ensuing 20 minutes that I have to share some of my thoughts, the government will realize the error of their ways, that they could have improved this legislation considerably by incorporating some of our proposals.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): It's indeed an odd situation where one resumes a debate that was actually completed on May 17, in the spring, and here we are in October, but this is a place where that happens every day.

I do want to thank the members for Simcoe North, Timmins-James Bay, Ottawa-Orléans and Oak Ridges for entering into the comments.

To the member for Simcoe North, this is important. He questioned whether or not it's important enough to be here tonight. I think it is, because the question will be in the future, if we pass Bill 18 and we take the Provincial Auditor and make him the Auditor General, would any government dare to lower the standard? Because what we're doing is raising the standard. That's why I was glad to hear that the parties, perhaps with some reservation, are interested in supporting this bill, because it's all about setting higher standards; it's all about transparency and accountability. That's what makes this piece of legislation good.

The member from Oak Ridges was saying that this government somehow thinks that it's omniscient. I don't think so. I think of the report that we just had from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs in regard to the five-year review of the Ontario Securities Commission. Well, that was a unanimous report. That had the support of both opposition parties. I don't think it's fair to characterize the government as being one that's not willing to look at the input. But I know that this government has been working hard on emergency measures, something that is, in my opinion, non-partisan, and we didn't gain that support from the opposition, who in many cases boycotted all of those meetings. I found that quite disturbing. So this place is "catch as catch can." Sometimes the opposition wants to come along and participate, and sometimes they would rather oppose. I understand that that is their right.

In conclusion, I do want, with the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Minister of Energy here, to thank them so much for making the announcement today in my riding, and I look forward to more debate on Bill 18, a very important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Klees: I understand now that I only have 10 minutes to share my thoughts on this bill.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Thank God.

Mr Klees: The Minister of Energy expresses his expletive at that. I know he would have preferred to hear much more from me, but I'm prepared to send him a memo, including all the amendments that I'm proposing. Hopefully he, in his wisdom, will incorporate this.

Hon Mr Duncan: Send the bill to committee.

Mr Klees: He refers to committee. I don't know if the government's prepared to have this bill go to committee. I would think that you can't, on the one hand argue, for transparency and accountability for your transfer agen-

cies and then behave like a monarchy as a government, saying, "We're going to ram this legislation through. We're going to do it our way. We'll let you have your few minutes of debate but, you know, we won't listen."

Speaker, you'll recall when the government was sitting here, and in particular the Minister of Energy, who is also the House leader, would rail against our government on occasion—unfounded, I might say—for not providing enough opportunity for debate, for not providing enough opportunity for good, reasoned amendments to legislation. It would be very interesting—in fact, I'm going to ask the table if they would do some research for us and, over the last year, up until this day, from the time this government has been in office, find out for us how many amendments this government has adopted into its legislation that were proposed by the opposition parties. I see the table is smiling, because I know that they look forward to that exercise. They also know it is going to be a matter of seconds that it will take them to do that research, because there haven't been any, interestingly enough. There haven't been any, and it doesn't matter what bill it is.

So what I want to point out to people who are observing the proceedings here tonight is the sham of what we are going through in this Legislature. I say it's a sham because on the one hand this should be time for debate, and what people would expect takes place in this House is that the minister who is responsible for this bill would himself at least be here. Now, I can't say that he's not, you see, and I haven't said that, but one would certainly expect that the minister would be here to listen to the proposals and recommendations and concerns that are being expressed about legislation that he has tabled here. One would expect that the amendments that are being proposed would at least be given some consideration.

If there was some open-mindedness here, wouldn't you expect, Speaker—and I don't know how many hundreds of hours of debate we've had since this government has been in office, but certainly a few; not many pieces of legislation, but certainly a few. Wouldn't you expect that, out of all of that, there would at least be one amendment that would have been adopted and accepted, incorporated into legislation? But no. What it shows, Speaker, is that this institution of Parliament is in large part absolutely ineffective when it comes to making good laws, because the making of good laws surely incorporates at least the collective wisdom of the opposition. That's not to say that everything the government does is bad, although they're getting close, but certainly there should be some acceptance that the recommendations that are being made by the opposition parties would have some credibility.

Speaker, it's because of the conduct of this government and the absolute disregard that this government has for the opinion of the official opposition—and I include the third party in this—because of their attitude, that I will move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1903 to 1933.

The Acting Speaker: All members in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 41; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is carried.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES QUESTIONS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 22, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can you just indicate who's next in the rotation?

The Acting Speaker: The opposition is. Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: You've spoken to it.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Pardon me?

The Acting Speaker: You've spoken to it.

Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You put the question three times and nobody rose.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees did get up. They thought he had spoken, but that was incorrect. The Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I regret the confusion, but the—

Hon Mr Duncan: You moved adjournment of the debate.

Mr Klees: No, it was the House leader.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member's not debating the bill. Does he know what bill we're debating?

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: I would suggest to the House leader that he's the one who called Bill 63. I'm more than happy to

speak to Bill 63. It was the House leader who suggested that I've already spoken to it, which is why there was confusion at the table. The House leader should get his facts straight about who has or has not spoken to this bill.

I am absolutely pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill, which makes amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000. This bill deals with hours in a workweek, averaging agreements and various other matters that obviously are of particular interest not only to members in the Legislature here but to people who work in this province—and the amendments that come into force on January 1, 2005.

Laughter.

Mr Klees: Speaker, it was the House leader of the government who called this bill, and I would ask you to call to order members of the rump of the government here who somehow are finding this very funny. I would suggest that if government members don't find this legislation serious, they should remove themselves.

The Acting Speaker: Can we have some order in the House? The member from Oak Ridges is speaking.

Mr Klees: Speaker, I was just going to offer that if you can't see the members who are being disorderly, I'll name them for you. I'm happy to help you with this.

In light of the fact that the House leader has called for debate on Bill 63, I know that we want to have an in-depth discussion and debate on this piece of legislation. In light of the fact that I certainly was not given notice, I will look to the opportunity to call adjournment of this debate, so that we can have adjournment of the House.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought I heard him call adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: What are you calling for, Mr Klees?

Mr Klees: I'm calling for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It's a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1940 to 2010.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. OK. All those opposed, rise and remain standing. Please be seated.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost. Mr Klees.

Mr Klees: In the remaining time, I want to impress on the people of Ontario that this bill that is before us is an empty shell. It represents, on the one hand, a commitment, supposedly, that this government is going to somehow protect workers against this evil thing that the previous government brought in, which was effectively flexibility that allowed an employer to work with employees in this province to ensure that, depending on the nature of the work that is being done in the workplace, they have an agreement about what an appropriate

length of day is and how many hours, in fact, they want to put in place.

This government represented that they were going to change all that and protect the workers in this province against this 60-hour week. Interestingly enough, all this government has done, in true Liberal fashion, is simply add layer upon layer of red tape and additional responsibility for work to the Ministry of Labour, which is underfunded and understaffed. It simply means it's going to be more difficult for employers to carry out their responsibilities.

Now this government and this minister are going to require employers and employees to sign a written contract agreement that they want to work more than the 48 hours. That's typical Liberal. What it's going to do is interfere with what we had attempted to achieve and did achieve, and that is a co-operative workplace, co-operation between workers and employers.

While we were waiting for the bells, I was dealing with a constituent. I want to read into the record something that I think is extremely important for members of the Legislature. It comes from my constituent Massimo Sturino from Richmond Hill. I am going to quote in part from his e-mail to me. He says, "The more articles I read about health spending, the more ignorant I believe the people in charge of allocating this money are."

The reason for this, the context, was that we were talking about the importance of ensuring that hospitals, transfer agencies, can in fact be appropriately audited by the Provincial Auditor. That was in the previous debate. But the reason I read it into the record here was that, while we were waiting for the bells to finish ringing, I was dealing with my constituent on this and assured him that we would do everything in our power to ensure that hospitals, colleges and universities are in fact held to account and that there be audits for value.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is debating the bill that he asked to adjourn the debate on earlier. He should refer to Bill 63 at least once, I would say. It's been about three minutes since he referred to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Please refer to the bill. Do you understand?

Mr Klees: Thank you, Speaker. If the House leader doesn't appreciate the fact that I am acting and speaking on behalf of an issue that my constituent feels very strongly about, then I move to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved to adjourn the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2016 to 2046.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 33; the nays are 9.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is carried.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM
CANCELLATION ACT, 2004
LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME
DE PERFECTIONNEMENT
PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this evening to speak on Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, 2004. That title itself pretty much says it all, really: the cancellation act. I think it's pretty disappointing when the government is bringing in bills to cancel a program that obviously has a lot of benefit. I think what's happening is that the government is just kowtowing to the teacher unions and not looking out for the best interests of the children, not doing what's right for the education of our children.

I just recently had the pleasure of going to Alaska to attend the council of state governments. There were a couple of Liberal MPPs along on that trip as well. One of the very interesting sessions that occurred there, a very worthwhile session, was a session on education. It was a whole morning session on the federal American program No Child Left Behind. There were all sorts of experts there. One of the experts, the commissioner of education for the United States, was at this seminar. Lots of experts gave speeches, and then afterwards there was a question and answer period.

One of the questions the commissioner of education for the United States was asked was, "What about class sizes?" One of the main features of this government is class sizes, reducing class sizes to a fixed cap of 20 from junior kindergarten to grade 3. So the commissioner of the United States was asked about class sizes. What do you think his response was? That this is a great thing, that you get fantastic results from it? No, his response was that the research on class sizes is ambivalent, that it's very expensive for the dollars. If you have precious dollars to invest in education, basically what he said was, "The results are not worth the money you spend to achieve those smaller class sizes." The bang for the buck is just not there.

Do you know what the research is not ambivalent on at all? The research shows that teachers who have taken professional learning, who are at the top of their game in terms of being up to date on their programs, achieve a very beneficial result for our students. That is very clear: that if you have teachers performing at their best, they have more effect on our students, on our children, than

any other single factor. That is something that is not ambivalent at all, that is very clear, and yet this government, with Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, is cancelling that professional learning.

What can possibly be the motivation for bringing this bill in? I know they have plans to have the teachers' unions take over the college of teachers. They're basically just responding to the teachers' unions. They're not thinking about what's best for our kids. They're not thinking about how our kids can do better, because if they were, they wouldn't be bringing this bill in, Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program. Really, it's quite disappointing to see this bill coming forward.

Other education-related actions by the government, and I think actions—

Interjection.

Mr Miller: Absolutely. A good point, member from Oak Ridges. What has the government done? They cancelled the Leslie M. Frost Centre. If there was ever a place that was more about education than the Leslie M. Frost Centre, I don't know what it is. That's their action: They've shut down the Leslie M. Frost Centre. How did they do it? Did they come and talk to the people of Haliburton, Muskoka, all the various interest groups that have a strong interest?

Interjection.

Mr Miller: There was support from all the parties for the Frost centre. Did they talk to anybody before they shut it down? No, they didn't. I heard rumours that it was about to close one day; the next day the locks were being changed at the Frost Centre and the employees were being told not to come to work. This is the way this government consulted, and this is how they're acting.

Do you know what was supposed to happen at the Frost Centre on September 30?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): What?

Mr Miller: There were supposed to be 1,600 school-aged children, many from the Trillium Lakelands board, who were supposed to be attending a conference at the Frost Centre on water quality, to learn all about water, to learn how important the environment is. Obviously the environment, as well as learning, is not important to this government; if it was, they wouldn't have shut down the Frost Centre. That conference with 1,600 school-aged children that was supposed to happen at the Frost Centre didn't happen because there was no place for them to hold that conference. Those kids didn't learn about the environment, about the importance of our water, one of our most precious resources. That's what this government has done.

Interjection.

Mr Miller: Sorry, member from Oak Ridges?

Interjection.

Mr Miller: I want to say that excellent teachers are very important, and we can't forget that. We have to do what we can to support them, to give them all the skills

so they can do their job, because we've all had excellent teachers who have made a real difference in our lives.

When I think back to a long time ago when I was a troublesome student back at Bracebridge Public School, I can say that there were some really excellent teachers who made school interesting and made school fun.

I think of the principal of Bracebridge Public School, Mr Neil Haight, who went out of his way to make me enjoy going to school, enjoy Bracebridge Public School. I think of Mrs Knight or Miss Mae McCracken. Mae McCracken used to tell great stories in class and make it really interesting for us. She would go on for hours and hours with these wonderful stories. She was training politicians with the good stories she used to teach us. I think that was about grade five.

I think of Lanny McQuain, who was our phys-ed teacher in high school. He couldn't ski, but he was the coach of our all-Ontario high school ski team. We actually won the all-Ontario, amazingly enough, not because he could teach us how to ski, but because he knew how to teach.

Mr Hudak: Motivated.

Mr Miller: He motivated us and he was a great teacher. He really inspired us to realize how important physical education is as well.

I think about a university professor I had, Harry Pope, W.H. Pope, who taught economics. He made that class so interesting. Every day he would come in with a different newspaper clipping. He would relate economics to us in a very personal, day-to-day way that made it very real and made it so that it meant something to us. It inspired me. I think that was one of the classes I actually did reasonably well in.

Excellent teachers really are important, and we need to give them the skills to do the job to their best ability. As I said, the research on teachers with skills shows that that is the single most important factor in a child achieving the best possible results they can.

What possible motivation, other than the union pulling the strings at the college of teachers, what possible rationalization can you have to bring in this Bill 82 to cancel professional learning?

I think this government should also be learning from the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, who just came out with a report last week.

Mr Hudak: What did Gord say?

Mr Miller: Gord was talking about the deposit-return system. I happen to have brought in a private member's bill on an LCBO deposit-return system, and I am working on a deposit-return bill to cover just about everything else because I happen to believe it's really important and it's the way we can achieve much higher targets of recycling. We can achieve the government's goal of 60% diversion easily if we bring in a deposit-return system.

The Ottawa Citizen agrees with me. I'll just quote from their article about how the government can learn from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario:

"Small Deposit, But Big Payoff

"Ontario's environment commissioner has stopped just short of recommending that the province start levying a deposit on recyclable cans and bottles, but that's just what the government should do"—and that's what I think they should do.

"Gordon Miller, in his annual report, lays out in detail the problem Ontario has with those recyclable containers, especially aluminum soft-drink cans. We're recycling about 42% of the cans we use. That doesn't sound too bad, except that it means about a billion cans a year are going somewhere else, probably into landfills. Mr Miller estimates that's \$25.5 million worth of aluminum."

I think we really need to learn from the Environmental Commissioner that deposit-return is something that we should be bringing in. We need to learn from the other provinces as well. In Quebec they have a deposit-return system. We can learn from the beer bottle system as well, where 98% of beer bottles get returned. We should look at Quebec. Quebec has a crown corporation that runs machines in supermarkets that accept soft drink cans in exchange for a three-cent refund, minus a two-cent handling—so it's five cents minus two cents. Quebec reports collecting just under 80% of the 893 million aluminum cans sold in the province in 2003, as compared to 42%.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm really interested in hearing the member's views on the bill that has been called. He hasn't been speaking to the bill that has been called.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Parry Sound.

Mr Miller: I think that we should be doing recycling in our schools as well. Frankly, I'm surprised that it's not in Bill 82, that there's not a recycling component in Bill 82. All they're talking about is cancelling professional learning programs, when really they should be talking about some recycling in the schools.

I'm quite disappointed that none of the government members are willing to speak to Bill 82. Because of that, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. Call in the members; a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2101 to 2131.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 6; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr Miller: It's my pleasure to continue the debate on Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program.

I guess you have to ask yourself: Why do they want to cancel the professional learning program? Look at other professions. If you're a pilot, I think you'd be doing some professional learning. For example, if you're an instrument pilot, I believe every other year you have to do training, of course, but then you also have to pass a very strict test to show that you in fact can fly the plane through the clouds and land safely.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): If you can't, you fail.

Mr Miller: If not, if you don't pass that test and if you don't do the professional learning, then you're no longer a commercial pilot.

Are our kids not as valuable? The object of professional learning is to achieve better results with our children, to have them succeed better. Doctors, lawyers, architects: They all have professional learning, so why is it such a great idea to cancel the professional learning program for teachers? I fail to see how this makes any sense at all. We should be giving the teachers the tools they need to be able to do a great job. I know they want to do absolutely the best job to achieve the success that they can.

I had a chance in the break to look at some of the election promises made by this government in this very recent election, the October 2 election. Many of these promises are related to education. I noted promise number seven in the education section.

Mr Hudak: What was that?

Mr Miller: "We will give teachers the tools and the training for excellence." Well, I would have thought that professional learning is part of the tools you need for excellence, and yet here we have a bill that's cancelling a professional learning program. How does that make any sense at all?

Promise number one: "We will build a strong public education system that supports student successes and raises student achievement." All the studies show that you give professional training for teachers and you get the better results. So this does not make sense. It doesn't jibe with the promises they made so recently in the October 2 election.

Promise number 20: "We will turn the Ontario College of Teachers into a professional body that sets the highest standards for the profession and earns the respect of teachers and parents." What in fact the government is doing is they are turning control of the Ontario College of Teachers over to teachers' unions, they're creating more spots for the teachers' unions, when it should be an independent body. The college of teachers deals with discipline, with qualifications, with training, and it should be an independent body, just like the college of physicians is. This government, in turning control of the Ontario College of Teachers over to the teachers' unions, will not benefit children.

The teachers I've been talking to—some of the issues they've been raising—of course, my riding is Parry Sound-Muskoka. They've been talking to me about Muskoka being taken out of the north by this government. They've been talking to me about the concerns they have

with how that's going to affect the health care in our area. They've been talking about the programs directly affected by Muskoka's being taken from the north. For example, there was a violence program called Girlz Unplugged, run by, I believe it was, the YWCA and Muskoka/Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services. This government has chosen not to fund that program. I believe the funding came through the northern Ontario programs. So they've chosen not to fund this valuable program.

Last week I attended a conference on violence against women and children that was run by the YWCA and Muskoka/Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services. That's a valuable program. Luckily, the community has recognized how important this Girlz Unplugged program is. In fact, they have gone to the district of Muskoka and have successfully received funding from the district of Muskoka for this important program. But they had to do that because the provincial government cancelled the funding for this important program. That's what some of the teachers I've been talking to have been talking about.

I'm very lucky in that I have four children and they all went to school, Oakley, in the town of Bracebridge. They attended Monk Public School and had some absolutely excellent first-rate teachers who I'm sure would like to be able to take advantage of professional learning programs to upgrade their skills to do the absolute best job that they can.

I know that Abigale, my oldest daughter—it's hard to believe, but she's in her fourth year at university, just finishing up at McGill, taking biochemistry and doing very well at it and looking forward to doing her master's next year. In fact, she's applying for a Commonwealth scholarship, where you can go and study in a Commonwealth country. She's looking at New Zealand. My only worry is, she's going to go to New Zealand, meet some guy and never come back. But she has had some great teachers who have gotten her to where she is now, to successfully complete four years of biochemistry at McGill.

My next daughter, Renee, is in her second year at Guelph, taking marketing and doing very well. She was able to achieve that success because of the excellent teachers that she had at Monk Public School.

My son Stuart is now in grade 12. Stuart's doing well as well, and is trying to make the big decision about what he's going to do for the rest of his life. He's thinking about something along the veterinary line. He's very much into animals. His grandfather on my wife's side is a farmer, so he quite likes animals.

Winston is in grade 10 and doing very well.

I might point out, they all took French immersion in public school and had some excellent teachers who gave them success. But I really cannot see how cancelling the professional learning program, as proposed in Bill 82, is going to benefit the children, and education should be all about children.

It has been my pleasure to speak to Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, this evening.

2140

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The bill we're dealing with was really teacher testing. The former government called it by some other names to try to camouflage it, but that's what it was. It was, regrettably, one more in a long line of attack against teachers by the former government. That was the reality. I already spoke on the bill, so you don't have the benefit of 20 minutes of me tonight speaking on this bill. But let me say a couple of things.

First of all, what other group had mandatory testing? Did we ask physicians to take 14 courses in order to upgrade their skills to deal with the public? No, we did not. Did we ask nurses to take 14 courses to upgrade their skills to deal with the public? No, we did not. Did we ask paramedics to take 14 courses so they could upgrade their skills to deal with the public? Did we ask police officers to take 14 courses, and pay for it themselves, in order to provide public safety? No, we did not. The only group the former government went after was teachers, telling them that they had to take 14 courses and they had to pay for the same courses, because that was the only way they could be truly qualified to teach our kids.

Look, all kinds of boards had professional development for their teachers, and hopefully they will again. My dad was a teacher. My mom was a teacher. My brother is a teacher. My sister-in-law is a teacher. All of the above took professional development and were interested in that and didn't have to be forced to do it and didn't have to pay a lot of money to take 14 courses. Teachers will do that because they care about what is happening in the classroom, they want to know that they are dealing with the most up-to-date learning and information that they can transmit to students. They don't have to go through testing in order to prove to someone that they are qualified to be teaching our children. It was all about an ongoing attack on teachers, and I hope now we can get back to professional development in the manner in which it was delivered before the former government went after this group.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Just a couple of quick comments. The member from Nickel Belt encapsulated exactly what this was all about, so I appreciate her comments. I'm sure all the teachers in the province know exactly what this charade is all about. But I want to make sure that we point out very clearly what the Tories have done. We have tried to bring three bills to the table. They have used bells not to discuss and debate them whatsoever. I think the people know very clearly, in terms of what's happening, that the very bills they are talking about are not being discussed, and we are wasting our time. I think maybe there's a better way to do this.

Mr O'Toole: I want to compliment the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka because he gave voice to those who haven't been hijacked.

I want to put on the record the eminently qualified boards that I represent and meet with and have served on:

the Durham District School Board, which is chaired by Elizabeth Roy, and the vice-chair is Kathleen Hopper. I should mention Steve Martin, who is the trustee representing Scugog. On the Durham Catholic District School Board, Mary Ann Martin is the chair and Joe Corey is a long-serving member, the vice-chair. In fact, I think he was a trustee back when I was a trustee. Also, on the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, I would say Angela Lloyd—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): A great board.

Mr O'Toole: The member from Peterborough is quite right: a very active board and, I might say, quite upset with this government on certain issues. I'll get to those in a moment. I think I have about an hour here, but I will try to boil it down to two minutes. There's also the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, chaired by Joe Whibbs. I served with Joe Whibbs, along with Lorne Corkery and other members of the board. I should mention that George Ashe, a former treasurer of Ontario, was also serving on that board.

I want to bring to the table something that's important: this correspondence to the Minister of Education, dated September 17. They're very concerned about two issues in education: one is fairness in transportation, and the other one is special education. This memo to the minister, still not responded to, quite deliberately talks about the clawback in special education. What a punitive, demeaning first instance by the Minister of Education. You know, one could speak for some time on this file, because the government here has given it all over to teacher unions. I can just see Earl Manners rubbing his hands together, as he has finally won the victory. The Liberals have capitulated to the OSSTF and other union bosses. They don't want to improve the college of teachers—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First I want to speak to the barely concealed but vicious attack on the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka by the member from Brant. I want to say that I listened carefully to the comments by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I believe he showed incredible restraint. He sought adjournment of the House. Then, when he had the floor yet once again, did he seek adjournment of the debate? No. He showed a restraint that is outstanding in the course of this evening's debate.

So I say to the member from Brant: Exercise far more discretion when you launch your arrows against honourable members of the opposition. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, in the most honourable tradition, utilized the modest 20 minutes available to him in the most efficient and effective way possible. While I was pleased to see him move adjournment of the House and perhaps dismayed at his failure to move adjournment of the debate, I understood that it was in his enthusiasm to ensure that he utilized every moment available to him to address this important issue.

What I want to tell people is that the member from Timmins-James Bay is going to be speaking next, and

I'm looking forward to that. Earlier today he was in Kirkland Lake, addressing important issues around softwood lumber and thousands of jobs in northern Ontario and indeed the economic welfare of Ontario, of this whole province. He has important things to say about this legislation. I'm awaiting, with bated breath, the comments from the member from Timmins-James Bay, in both of our official languages.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has two minutes to reply.

Mr Miller: Thank you to the members from Nickel Belt, Brant, Durham, and Niagara Centre for their comments.

The professional learning program that has been in place, I believed to be quite a reasonable program. It involved 14 courses over five years that had to be completed: seven that were compulsory and seven that were optional—whatever happened to catch the interest of the particular teacher. We have to remember what the purpose of that program was, and that was for the teachers to be able to have skills to achieve the absolute best results for the students they were teaching.

The member from Nickel Belt mentioned police officers. Yes, police officers go, on a regular basis, for recurrent training. They do something that's called block training, where they go away for a week at a time—whether it be how to use a firearm, for example. They have to shoot something like 50 rounds at a set distance and have them all within a certain pattern. If they don't achieve that result, then they don't qualify. Of course, they have many other different segments of their specialty that they have to prove their ability and their skill at so that they're able to fulfill the very dangerous and worthwhile job of being a police officer.

I'm slightly aware of this because my wife, Christine, is an auxiliary OPP officer. She goes through that recurrent training even though she does that as a volunteer job.

I think we can't lose sight of what the purpose of professional learning is all about with regard to teachers, and that is achieving the best results we can for our students. That's why it does not make any sense whatsoever to cancel this professional learning program.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Mr Speaker, je suis donc content; c'est chaleureux d'être ici avec vous ce soir. Vous savez que c'est toujours un honneur et un plaisir de parler dans cette Assemblée. Comme vous le savez, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui en a l'occasion. Seulement les membres qui ont le plaisir, et je dirais la chance, d'avoir été élus ici en Ontario, à cette Assemblée, peuvent venir ce soir ou n'importe quel soir ou journée parler à cette Assemblée et puis vous dire, « Que je suis donc content que j'ai l'occasion. » Vous, monsieur, madame, avez tous l'occasion.

C'est la Loi 82. Imaginez-vous qu'ils vont finalement faire quelque chose de bien. C'est donc le fun pour changer, hein? Ce gouvernement, depuis le temps qu'ils sont arrivés, ont fait des promesses après des promesses

dans les élections, et à chaque occasion qu'ils ont eue, ils ont brisé ces promesses. Ce soir, ils essaient d'en garder une. Il faut les féliciter pour une fois.

2150

M^{me} Martel: C'est un miracle.

M. Bisson: C'est un miracle, comme dit ma collègue. Cela paraît comme si le gouvernement une journée avait décidé, « On a brisé autant de promesses. » « Pourquoi pas », a dit le premier ministre au ministre de l'Éducation, « garder au moins une promesse? On en a fait 231 dans les élections et j'aimerais être capable de me promener dans la province et dire que j'en ai gardé une. » Ce soir on est ici, et ce gouvernement essaye de garder une promesse.

M^{me} Martel: Mais cela ne coûte rien.

M. Bisson: Mais ça ne coûte rien. C'est mon point, madame Martel. Cette promesse nous coûte quoi? Je veux revoir certaines des promesses que ce gouvernement a faites dans le domaine d'éducation.

Vous le savez tous et toutes, petits Libéraux et petites Libérales, les mesdames et messieurs qui ont été élus. Vous avez—

Une voix.

M. Bisson: Pas pire, celle-là. Madame Smith, c'est pour dire 25 promesses dans le domaine d'éducation, des promesses qu'ils auraient pu garder. On va les revoir.

Il y avait la promesse pour créer l'excellence en éducation en faisant des investissements dans nos écoles. C'était fait?

M^{me} Martel: Non.

M. Bisson: Non. Imaginez-vous que ça n'a pas été fait. On aurait pu être ici ce soir pour faire ce débat. Non, il n'est pas là. On aurait pu faire par exemple beaucoup de promesses. Il faut les faire en anglais parce que ce document est en anglais. C'est donc un « drag ». Pourquoi le Toronto Sun n'écrit-il pas en français de temps en temps? On pourrait se servir des documents du Toronto Sun en français. Madame Meilleur, vous êtes la ministre. Vous avez l'occasion. Passez une loi. Faites quelque chose. Comme Charles Aznavour a dit—avez-vous compris la chanson de Charles Aznavour quand il parle de la peinture, « ton âme et ton corps »? On va la chanter ce soir.

There are a number of promises—I have to do this in English because unfortunately the document is in English, and trying to translate it all at the last minute would be very difficult. But let's go through it. Here we are; the government's trying to hold to one promise. They're saying, "Oh, look at us. We've done something for a change. Ontario will be excited." So they finally passed a bill, or are trying to pass a bill tonight, that we'll probably support in the end. But I think there needs to be a little bit of debate, and I know some of the teachers—in fact, I had the AEFO who came into my office earlier this week and said they had some issues they wanted to talk about when it goes to committee because there were a few things they wanted to raise.

So let's take a look at the promises they made, the 25 promises they made in education that they could have

actually kept. They say, "We will bring peace and stability to our schools." What does that mean? Tell me how you bring peace and stability to schools. It's like saying, "I'm bringing law and good order in government." Basically it's a do-nothing promise.

Ms Martel: Especially when you claw back special ed. Then that's hard to do.

Mr Bisson: Well, that's my point. When you claw back special-ed funding, tell me how you can keep all those kinds of promises inside our schools.

"Our Excellence For All plan guarantees that within our first mandate, 75% of our students meet or exceed the provincial standard on province-wide tests." We're not anywhere near that. As a matter of fact, there are all kinds of issues if you take a look at our schools across this province, which are having a tough enough time as it is.

What do we need to do to make that happen? Certainly we have to do some of the stuff that's contained within this bill and make sure our teachers are properly prepared and able to keep up with the latest of training methods for our students. But I don't see the government running very fast to keep that particular promise.

We have the other promise that I thought was really, really interesting, where it says, "We will make high-quality childcare and education available for our younger learners." What have they done in the order of child care? In fact, there's a report that just came out a couple of days ago—

Ms Martel: Today.

Mr Bisson: Was it today? I thought it was yesterday—where they're saying that basically Ontario is taking a step backwards when it comes to child care as it compares to other jurisdictions. The only place that's making gains is the province of Quebec. This was the study of the Paris—I forget the name of the organization.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The OECD. Merci beaucoup.

They are saying that if you take a look at child care as a service provided to people, you'll see that Canada quite frankly is falling back. The only place that's really doing anything to look at child care in a really positive way, so that we look at child care not just as babysitting but actually giving kids an educational experience so that they can get some net benefit education-wise through their child care programs—

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Are you saying child care is just baby-sitting?

Mr Bisson: It's not just babysitting—is that we need to make sure we provide the type of training that prepares our kids so that when they go into school, they're able to better cope with school and able to advance faster. It's what they call Best Start.

The province of Quebec, interestingly, has made great strides in that, but Ontario is nowhere to be found. My point is—

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Are you going to rise on a point of order, Minister?

Mr Bisson: The minister wants to rise on a point of order?

Mr Yakabuski: No, no. I was asking.

Mr Bisson: Is that what you want, Madame Meilleur, un point d'ordre?

Ms Martel: No, it's not Madame Meilleur.

Mr Bisson: Oh, my other friend, Leona. Any time.

Ms Martel: No, Marie.

Mr Bisson: Marie. Sorry. Did I call you Leona? Oh, my Lord, let me put my long-distance glasses on. That is you. Sorry. There we go.

Anyway, the interesting part is that if you look at this entire list of 25 promises, I note that out of 25, there are but two or three promises that are being kept so far. The only other one that's being kept—and most people would have forgotten it—is the whole issue of private schools. Remember that whole issue? The Conservatives had a philosophy that they wanted to advance the idea of private schools. That's the only promise they have kept. So far, you've kept the private schools promise and you've kept the promise around the teacher certification, but you're not dealing with all of the other stuff in your platform that I think is important.

Here are some of the things I think you should be doing. For example, we know that about two weeks ago my good friend Mr Marchese held a press conference here—my friend from Hamilton Centre, I believe it is, Andrea Horwath, as well—on the issue of busing.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: East. You aren't getting anything right tonight.

Mr Bisson: East, sorry. Well, I know. Ce n'est pas ma faute. Voyons donc, mon amie. On est demandés à la dernière minute de présenter sur ces projets de loi.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: *Remarks in Greek.*

Mr Bisson: Très bien, madame. Say that again to me slowly, please.

Anyway, my good friend Andrea Horwath raised the issue that this government could have chosen to support busing. As we have right now, the government has decided to come out with a formula around busing that quite frankly is going to put a lot of school boards at a disadvantage. For example, in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, the city of Timmins, the Catholic board and the public board were the first two boards in the province of Ontario to do in-common busing. They decided—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Coterminous busing.

Mr Bisson: No, no. Those are coterminous boundaries; that's a different thing. But they decided to do in-common busing—

Ms Martel: Shared busing.

Mr Bisson: —or shared busing. At one time in this province, each school board ran its own busing policies and hired their own buses. You had a situation where the English board would stop at one house, and at the next house you'd have the French Catholic board. There wasn't a good sharing of buses. Anyway, the city of

Timmins, through the two boards, came together, decided to co-operate, and they have been doing that for some years. Along came the Conservatives and they created the four boards—one of the good things they did, by the way, when they were in power.

What am I doing here? I can't believe it. I said something nice about the Conservatives. Man, it was the first time. Oh, man, I never thought I would be able to take that first step. But anyway, the Conservatives decided, rightfully so, that there should be four school boards available to parents in order to allow parents the opportunity to choose. It was the whole issue in regard to French governance, where you have basically French Catholic and French public boards and English Catholic and English public. The point around busing is that up until now they have been able to share on busing.

What happened? The government has an amending formula that basically says, "We are going to change the formula. We're going to give some people an increase, but a whole bunch of school boards get a decrease." For example, the English Catholic board in our community is going to lose 40% of their busing funding. That's serious. It means that particular school board is losing 40% of their funding. Ask yourself the question, are the other boards that have a big surplus going to use their money in order to offset the money those particular boards have lost? I think not. So what you could end up with in the same community is, in our case, the English Catholic board having a busing policy that's different from and inferior to one of the other English boards. And if that's the case, it's going to be a disadvantage to the English Catholic board.

I would hope this particular government would be more responsive to that issue and would revisit their decision on the funding of the busing so that we don't put at risk the busing for children across this province. I can tell you, I got a huge number of phone calls in the fall, as I'm sure a whole bunch of other members got, both Liberals and New Democrats and Conservatives, from a whole bunch of different people in their ridings really upset at the school boards for having enacted that policy in preparation for the change of funding for next year.

This particular bill, however, which deals with the whole issue of teacher certification, takes the right step. It basically says that if there's a policy in the province that says you have to have recertification and training as a mandatory part of hanging on to your licence, it would only be fair that we do that for all professions and trades. And seeing that we only singled out the teachers, I think it's right that we either repeal this act or, if there's a debate, do it for everybody. I wouldn't favour doing it for everybody, because that would be a pretty onerous situation.

I believe this should be a voluntary thing, and the interesting thing to note is that school boards and teachers have been doing this for years. Long before the Conservative government came along, teachers and school boards had been sending their teachers out and teachers had been choosing to go out in order to get

upgraded so they could keep current with the new methods of teaching and whatever was available. I think that needs to be said.

Mr Speaker, I think it would probably be the right time and I think it would be the right thing at this point to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2201 to 2231.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 8; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, it's getting closer and closer every time, I must point out. We're getting up there. If this were like a horse race, we'd be just turning around the last corner and coming around; who knows what could happen when we cross the finish line?

This bill raises an interesting debate in the province with regard to the whole issue of mandatory testing. One of the issues—and I think this is a serious one, in the sense that with all trades, professions, etc, one of the things that we strive for in industry and I think we need to strive for within our training institutions is: How are we able to keep our tradespeople and our professionals up to date with the latest in technologies? For example, I'm an electrician by trade. That's what I did at one point before coming to the Legislature. I apprenticed as an electrician and worked in that field for a number of years.

Mr Kormos: Ohm's law is your middle name.

Mr Bisson: Ohm's law is my middle name? I don't think so.

My point is this: Let's say a person is licensed in 1980 and works in the trade and 10 years later is working for the same employer. In some cases, an employer may take a person and put them in a particular task or part of the plant where you're really not picking up any new skills, and it raises the issue: How are you able to keep that skilled tradesperson up to date and current so that they have transferable skills that they're able to take elsewhere or, should the employer decide to transfer the employee or make changes to his or her plant, you're better able to deal with that? That's a huge problem.

I attended a meeting this afternoon with the Honourable Rick Bartolucci and some people from the Timmins Economic Development Corp, and we—

Mr Kormos: Honourable?

Mr Bisson: I've got to call him "honourable." He's an honourable member of the cabinet. We'll give credit where credit is due.

We talked about that whole issue with regard to: How are we able to make sure that we are able to keep our people are up to date? That's a real issue. If we were to

get into a debate around that on this particular bill, it would be an interesting one to get into, because I don't think it's one that any government has really taken seriously with regard to how we're able to keep all the various professionals in our province up to date and how we keep all of our skilled tradespeople up to date, because we do know that technologies are changing very quickly in this modern world.

We know that a lot of employers often don't have the money, or even the foresight in some cases, to be able to update the skill set of those people in their employ, be it professions or trades. An employer that is not able to do that, at one point, I think, would become somewhat unproductive. One of the things we need to look at in this Legislature is how we're able to assist tradespeople, professionals and employers to be able to work at some kind of program to upgrade those skills.

I would argue, as a social democrat, that it is incumbent upon the employer. The employer would have the large responsibility of making sure that people in their employ kept up to date. After all, it is they that will benefit from these skills or professions.

On the other hand, it doesn't leave the government off the hook. Why is it, when we bring bills like this into the Legislature, that we don't get an opportunity to deal with that issue? What is the role of the colleges and universities in this province in making sure that we keep those particular skills up to date? I just think it's a long time overdue that we have a debate—if not in this Legislature, at least we should try to refer the matter to one of our committees—in order to take a look at that whole issue.

The other issue is, how do we bring new people into skills and trades and even professions? In fact, in northern Ontario, it's a huge problem. Somebody goes off to university—it might be locally in some cases if they go to l'université de Hearst, but more times than not, they will have to go afar to get their education. If they do come back after a three years' BA, four years' honours or another couple of years for a master's, how are they able to update their skills when it comes to the work they do? How do you go out and get, let's say, a master's after you've had an honours, and you're living in northern Ontario, and working somewhere—in rural Ontario, for that fact? How do you deal with that issue? Nobody has their head around it. If you're lucky enough to live in Sudbury, where there's a university, or in Thunder Bay or other places, it might be a little bit easier, or North Bay—Nipissing: a very good university. But what happens if you live in Kirkland Lake or White River or Hearst or Peawanuck? How do you deal with these issues?

Again, nobody has looked at the issue of how we are able to give people who are living in more remote areas of this province—and I would argue that there are places like that in southern Ontario, both southeast and southwest, that have the same problem; I'm sure in my good friend Mr Kormos's area—people who would like to be able to upgrade, and we've not thought about a strategy, how we can deal with distance education to

allow people to upgrade their skills. It's a very serious problem. We're not having that particular debate here, and I think that's rather unfortunate.

As I said, we had a meeting about this earlier with the Timmins Economic Development Corp and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and we were scrambling, trying to figure out how we're going to deal with that within our own city. But what was clear in that meeting, even though there was a minister willing to listen, is that there was no mechanism, there was no funding, there was no policy in place within this government or previous governments to deal with that issue. I think those are serious issues that we need to deal with.

If we're talking about how we are able to upgrade the skills of teachers—the Conservatives had a particular approach that I didn't agree with. They said they were going to make it mandatory, but only for teachers. I look at it on the other hand and say, well, was that really just picking at teachers, or are we really trying to get at an issue here? If the answer is the latter, which is that they were trying to get at an issue, why weren't we dealing with other trades and professions? So I think it raises an interesting issue that we've not had an opportunity to debate in this House for some time, and that is, how do we deal with that old issue of being able to upgrade skills?

I would be remiss if I didn't talk for a few minutes with regard to one of the promises this government made in order to support rural schools. Listen, there are schools across this province—my good friend Mr Kormos knows them, I know them, Madame Martel knows them, and others—which are in threat of closure because the funding formula does not deal adequately with rural schools. How are we going to deal with that? It's important for small communities to be able to have their schools. We heard the government, while they were in opposition, talk about making promises to be able to support schools. We heard the Minister of Education talk about the need to do it after they were elected. But at the end of the day, what are we really going to do if we're not prepared to change the funding formula? I think it's an important issue. It's an important debate.

Should smaller communities have access to a school, at least at the primary level? I would say yes. If I look at communities in my riding like Fauquier and Opasatika and others that have small schools, and we're talking 30 to 40 students per school, we understand that there's a cost to the school board to do that, but in many cases, that school is the only institution in the community and the only thing that, quite frankly, keeps the parents in that community, because if they have no school and they've got to put their young children on buses to send them 20, 30, 40, 50 miles up or down the highway, they're going to move to the larger centres, killing our small communities. I think we need to look at that with regard to the issue of funding.

With that, Mr Speaker, I think that was very interesting, we raised a lot of issues, and I would suggest that this is a good time to move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2241 to 2311.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 36; the nays are 1.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND
BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS
ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 22, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / *Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to speak on Bill 70 from the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, actually an extensive bill affecting a wide variety of statutes across the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. I want to say to the minister who has brought this bill forward—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Where is the minister?

Mr Hudak: The minister is not—they have called Bill 70 to the floor of the assembly as we speak at 11:15 on Monday evening. Perhaps the minister is on his way into the assembly to listen to debate on Bill 70—

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member that you don't refer to someone's absence, please.

Mr Hudak: Fair enough. I apologize, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Mr McMeekin, you're the parliamentary assistant. There you go. Maybe you can report back some of the comments about Bill 70 that we bring forward this evening.

The Minister of Consumer and Business Services, I think to his credit, has dusted off a number of initiatives that had been at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, including a lot that exist in Bill 70; I think I spoke about that this afternoon. It is the CBS day today. In fact, this is the second bill that they have called for debate from consumer and business services. I do recall a

number of these matters that had been before me when I was Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Hopefully I'll have time today, or other members may get into some of the specifics of the various acts that are amended, but my recollection in a general sense is, a number of these initiatives we had examined after consultation with stakeholders. I think members will forgive that over time, memory may not be 100% sure if all of the initiatives in this bill exactly mirror what we had been working on, but the gist of the legislation—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, it's true. The reality is—it's one thing we learn quickly—you don't have the same degree of resources on the opposition side. We do our best to try and bring attention and scrutiny to the government's legislation, as best as possible, and I know our critic, the member from Cambridge, is in attendance this evening to discuss the contents of Bill 70.

One thing that I wish we had more time to debate, and maybe the Minister of Consumer and Business Services will reverse this decision, is a very strange decision that certainly runs counter to what the Liberals had campaigned upon, and that's the closure of the land registry office in Welland. My colleague from Niagara Centre, who is here this evening, as he is most nights, has raised his great concern about the closure of the land registry office by the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I have as well, and will continue to do so. Certainly the legal community, who will be poring over Bill 70, will ask how that closure of the land registry office in Welland is consistent with the principles in this bill before the assembly this evening.

I recall a promise by the then campaigning Dalton McGuinty to try to improve government services, to put services into more locations across the province of Ontario. No doubt, if the minister were to speak to this, his parliamentary assistant would say that a good part of Bill 70 is trying to improve services to taxpayers or to particular businesses—motor vehicle sales, for example; those that deal with collection agencies, etc. One wonders why what's happening in the land registry office runs counter to what that member opposite would argue is one of the principles behind consumer and business services. Significant numbers of lawyers, for example, have already raised the spectre of the closure of the land registry office and the impact that is going to have on their ability to complete land transactions in a timely manner.

This came very strangely into the public eye when the communications plan from the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, if I recall, and the member for Niagara Centre can correct me if I'm wrong, seemed to indicate that the minister was bound to close the Welland office because you're only allowed to have one office in an upper-tier area—in a region.

Mr Kormos: That's bullfeathers.

Mr Hudak: As the member says—he uses "bullfeathers" or "horse feathers." I'm not sure which one is worse, but they both describe that type of communication. There's no such rule as that. I think, in fact, it

says there is a minimum of one office in a particular area. It's the opposite of what the communications plan by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services had said. It strikes me as very curious. Perhaps this is one that they tried to slip by the minister—they told him this communications plan and they released it. But I hope the parliamentary assistant will endeavour to go back to the staff of consumer and business services, and the minister will as well, to say that we should keep that land registry office in Welland open. It certainly is counter to what Bill 70 is all about, and it certainly runs counter to the way that the government had campaigned.

Granted, I do recognize that more and more registries are taking place electronically. In fact, we're the ones who brought that program in and expanded it across the province, including the Niagara Peninsula—a good program that has been well recognized. That having been said, that doesn't mean you can close those offices and cut off those services locally. If you're doing detailed searches or longer searches, for example, that office needs to be close by to those of us who represent or who come from the southern part of the Niagara Peninsula. Those who come from Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Welland, Fonthill, Wainfleet and even from my area in West Lincoln often found it more convenient to access the Welland centre, let alone any of the French-language services, which strikes me as curious. In opposition, the Liberals purported to be defenders of French-language services, but this is completely inconsistent with that kind of motivation or principle where Welland and Port Colborne, designated for French language services, receive them through the Welland land registry office and now find those services being abandoned in entirety by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services in its attempt to move the registry office to St Catharines and to close down the Welland office.

Hopefully, with the outcry from the legal community, the francophone community—I know the minister of francophone affairs is in the House, and I know that she will be a strong advocate to protect the land registry office.

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Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): And make sure that the other one offers French service too.

Mr Hudak: The minister, I appreciate, will endeavour to make sure the St Catharines office offers French-language services too. Our preference would certainly be, and I would wager that the francophone community in Niagara would like to see, the registry office in Welland offering French-language services. If you add St Catharines in addition to that, I'm sure they'll be very pleased with that, and the minister will receive due commendation for such a move. The preference, because the francophone community is closer to the Welland-Port Colborne area, would be to maintain those services at the Welland office, where they have been for some time. I appreciate the minister's attention to this; I know she works hard in her portfolio. Hopefully with her advocacy

and the member from Peterborough's advocacy to the minister, as well as the parliamentary assistant's, we can get this move reversed.

I'm not clear where it came from. I know that the staff at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, when you look at the extensive work that has been done behind Bill 70, deserve breaks. I think that ministry has superior skills in negotiating with the industries they represent, consumer advocacy groups. There's a constant consultation as part of—I forget, is it a five-year or 10-year review of the legislation? This stuff didn't just come out of thin air. It came after a lot of hard work by ministry staff, supported by various ministers. I'm pleased to see that is ongoing. So I find it puzzling, given the minister's reputation for consultation and knowing the commitment of the civil servants at the ministry, where this decision to close down the Welland registry office without any consultation, without any discussion of the repercussions, was arrived at.

Now, off the top of my head, I do know there are other areas in Ontario—other counties or regions—that enjoy having more than one land registry office, and I'm not aware of a similar move to close one of those offices. Maybe this is the first in a series; I certainly hope not. I do hope that with this team behind me of the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, the minister responsible for francophone affairs—of course, if you have the minister, or the member, from Peterborough on your side—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, maybe he should be considered the minister for Peterborough. Maybe that's the appropriate term for him. Everybody knows that if you have Mr Leal on your side, the chances of saving the Welland land registry office have increased substantially—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: —dramatically, as my colleague from Simcoe says.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The member for Niagara Centre let me know something I didn't know. I'm glad to hear that even though the member from Niagara Falls doesn't represent southern Niagara, he has shown interest in the topic—

Mr Kormos: It involves the judicial district of Niagara South.

Mr Hudak: Exactly.

Mr Kormos: Kim Craiton is going to save the VON too.

Mr Hudak: Well, Mr Craiton is a relatively new member; we won't burden him with too many tasks simultaneously.

Mr Kormos: He promised he'd save the VON.

Mr Hudak: For Hansard, the member for Niagara Centre has indicated that the member for Niagara Falls has announced his intention to help save the Niagara South registry office in Welland. Kudos to the member from Niagara Falls. I'm glad to hear he's onside for that, because the municipality of Niagara Falls is part of the south Niagara legal envelope, the legal basket of

services, so I'm pleased to hear that. In addition, he's apparently campaigning to help the VON in Niagara—certainly an admirable cause. I wish him success in that and, for the sake of tonight's debate on Bill 70, in helping to save the land registry office.

I see that the Bailiffs Act is part of Bill 70, an act that does need to be updated. I think the role that bailiffs play today is substantially different from the role they have played historically. I do know that there is an issue for the minister, the ministry and the government therefore to contend with, and that's how you define the particular powers of bailiffs. What is the definition of an assistant bailiff, for example? What legal powers would an assistant bailiff have to administer the Bailiffs Act? My recollection too is that there are a couple of groups of bailiffs that have somewhat different viewpoints on this, and hopefully the minister will be able to bring both sides to the table to find a solution acceptable to the bailiffs and others who are interested in this particular part of the act. I know that some bailiffs who have contacted me are concerned about the powers of the ministry for the overseer, if you will, of how the bailiffs conduct themselves and follow through with the legislation.

Interjection: How are the bailiffs going to work in Niagara?

Mr Hudak: I have had bailiffs visit me who have expressed concern about Bill 70. They expressed an inability and a bit of frustration to meet with the key decision-makers at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services to resolve that difficulty. Hopefully, with Peterborough's undertaking, that too will be solved in addition to the Welland registry office. But I do know it's a concern in the bailiff community, and I hope it will be resolved with satisfaction as Bill 70 is debated in the House. If it goes to committee, if there are appropriate amendments that can be made to the Bailiffs Act to satisfy the bailiff community, at the same time ensuring that the proper consumer protections are in place and that our legislation is modernized, I would be all for that, and I would look forward to that debate in committee or, if it's part of the debate as Bill 70 progresses through second reading, in the Legislature.

The Cemeteries Act also is revised under Bill 70. The Cemeteries Act is one thing that we may not often interact with as MPPs.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's a dead issue.

Mr Hudak: I'm looking at the members opposite who are very attentively listening to my remarks, and they are saying something about the Cemeteries Act. They have dealt with it.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I think they buried it.

Mr Hudak: The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke says that maybe the issue has been buried. We're used to the clever remarks from the member opposite, but unfortunately there are issues that have not been buried that do need to be dealt with. The Cemeteries Act is a piece of legislation that I think is about 80 or 90 years old and as such does need to be modernized in the context of the funeral services act. These regulations are currently out for consultation, but it does also appear in Bill 70.

Mr Speaker, due to the lack of interest in my discussion of the Cemeteries Act from more than one member, I do move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Hudak has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2328 to 2358.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 3; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 12 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock today.

The House adjourned at 2401.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)		Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 October 2004

Mardi 26 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to draw the attention of this House to two significant events that happened recently in different parts of my riding. Both involved expansions of Sir Sandford Fleming College.

The first was the opening of Fleming college's new Haliburton campus. The new campus, which includes a school of fine arts, is located in one of the most beautiful parts of the province. There are many players in the community who made this dream come true, but I want to mention the four main believers and drivers: Barb Bolin, principal of the Haliburton campus; Brian Desbiens, past president of Sir Sandford Fleming College; Murray Fearrey, a strong municipal leader, past warden and present reeve of Dysart, et al; and my predecessor, the Honourable Chris Hodgson. The Haliburton Fleming College is a one-of-a-kind facility with its big, open, spacious studios. What started from a few courses has developed into a full-fledged school of the arts. It is helping the area realize the dream of becoming the Banff of the east.

The other event I want to speak about today is the opening of Fleming's new environmental technology wing at their school of environmental and natural resource sciences. It is located at Sir Sandford Fleming's Frost campus in Lindsay. It is named after Leslie Frost, one of our province's greatest Premiers. This wing will help them to stay at the cutting edge of the movement to embrace green technologies. It's very easy to talk about incorporating green technologies into our everyday lives, but this new wing shows that it is possible to do. From the green roof to the wind turbine and the specially constructed wetlands, the students and staff are helping us all to learn more about environmental technology.

I encourage everyone to visit these new facilities. I am proud to have both the new Haliburton campus and the environmental technology wing located within my riding.

HYDRO RATES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Last week, Energy Minister Dwight Duncan held a press conference

in Hamilton unveiling a new design for Ontario energy bills. He said this would make things easier and simpler for hydro users, but will a shiny new bill in the mail help those residents of Hamilton East whose electricity and gas are disconnected because they can't afford to pay the bills? Will it help consumers in Hamilton East, and across the province, who have to pay exorbitant security deposits just to get their hydro and gas switched back on?

The winter weather is coming, and heating and hydro costs are rising. Many people in my riding will be without heat and power. Why? Because gas and hydro companies are facing rising costs and passing these costs on to consumers by becoming increasingly inflexible with regard to security deposits. In addition to the overdue amounts, those who have their heat and power disconnected also have to pay huge sums, upwards of \$500, to get it reconnected. Those people cannot afford energy-saving devices like the minister suggested they undertake to solve their problems.

The people who call my office every day simply want affordable hydro. That's the solution they're looking for. If they can't pay their arrears, they can't pay security deposits and they absolutely can't pay for new energy-saving devices, like furnaces and appliances.

There's no question that people will be left without places to live or will be living in homes and apartments with no heat and no hydro over the winter. The only question is, how many people will this be? Meanwhile the energy minister is distracting people with toothless pleas for conservation and newly designed hydro bills.

I call on the government to address the issue of security deposits immediately and to act today to ensure that no one is left in the cold and the dark this winter.

SIR FREDERICK BANTING

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand and speak about a famous Londoner, Sir Frederick Banting, who was born in 1891 in Alliston, Ontario.

Banting completed his medical studies at the University of Toronto and practised medicine in London. It was in London that he conceived a technique which might permit the isolation of the anti-diabetic component of the pancreas. By the middle of 1921, he and Charles Best had isolated insulin.

On the CBC program, *The Greatest Canadian*, Banting is one of the top 10 finalists. In London, people are rallying to the Frederick Banting cause.

For example, Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School in London West, the other five Banting schools in Canada and one in the USA will launch a fundraising campaign for the Canadian Diabetes Association as they solicit votes for Banting. This will help further the fight against diabetes.

Many businesses in London are rallying around Banting, asking people to vote for the famous Londoner, because they know that building strong communities starts with honouring community pioneers.

I am happy to support the Sir Frederick Banting cause. Along with my London colleagues, I ask for your support for the great Londoner and a great Ontarian in the CBC's quest for finding the greatest Canadian.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today and tomorrow, Fabry's patients, doctors and other health care professionals from across Canada will meet in Toronto to discuss a proposal to manage Fabry disease treatment.

During the last session of the House, I asked the Minister of Health on several occasions to provide reassurance to patients with the life-threatening Fabry disease that permanent funding of enzyme replacement therapy, ERT, for Fabry disease would be provided. This therapy is available in about 30 countries today, including the United States. However, despite the many letters and desperate pleas for permanent funding from Fabry patients, their families and friends, no response has been provided by the minister.

Minister, I remind you that on April 19 you stood in this Legislature and offered "the strongest possible assurance to the member and to those suffering with this illness that their government is working aggressively with a view to responding to the call that is required.... I'm very confident we will find a resolution that is up to the standard we all expect to deliver in Ontario."

Unfortunately, Donna Strauss lost her husband to Fabry disease. Minister, you gave your personal assurance to Donna Strauss in a handwritten letter on July 3, and I quote, "I wish to assure you that I will make certain of coverage for Fabry."

I urge the minister today to not keep these patients waiting any longer. End their anxiety and commit that permanent funding for ERT will be provided.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am proud to rise today to inform the House that our colleague the honourable Dr Marie Bountrogianni was recognized this past Friday for her advocacy on behalf of children and youth. At their 25th anniversary celebration, the week of the child and youth committee of Hamilton presented Dr

Bountrogianni with an award for her long-standing commitment to enhancing the lives of children, youth and their families. This group, whose mandate is to celebrate young people, acknowledged the minister for building community awareness around children's issues.

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Dr Bountrogianni's enthusiasm for issues affecting young people began long before she became Ontario's Minister of Children and Youth Services. Before she entered politics, she helped her mother operate a child care centre. She also earned degrees in early childhood education and child psychology. She went on to become chief psychologist for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. All these efforts earned her a reputation as a valued advocate for children and youth. Without a doubt, she is the ideal person to take on the challenge of building the new ministry.

She has already begun to stabilize the child welfare system, she's begun to expand the child care system by creating 4,000 new subsidized child care spaces and she has made the first significant investment in children's mental health services in 12 years, just to name a few things. When the Premier appointed Dr Bountrogianni to this new ministry, it was a match made in heaven, a little bit of heaven for the kids of this province.

SOUTHLAKE REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Yesterday, I was very pleased to stand beside Frank Stronach, chairman of Magna International, as he announced an \$8-million investment toward the cancer centre in Newmarket.

This represents the largest corporate donation to a hospital outside an urban area in Canadian history.

The new cancer centre, originally announced by Health Minister Tony Clement in 2003, will serve one million people in York region and southern Simcoe county.

Residents will be able to access life-saving diagnostics and therapeutics much closer to home, instead of having to make a lengthy trip to downtown Toronto.

Frank Stronach and Magna deserve our thanks for their commitment to the local community.

All the staff at Southlake Regional Health Centre, including the president, Dan Carriere, and all the doctors, nurses and medical and non-medical staff deserve our thanks for the care they provide every day.

The people of my community want this cancer centre. The doctors and staff of Southlake have stepped up to the plate, and Frank Stronach and others have given their support. The PC government gave its support, and I know our caucus still stands by this commitment.

It is time for the Liberal government to take a stand and commit the dollars needed to make this cancer centre a reality.

HAWKESBURY AND DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL

HÔPITAL GÉNÉRAL DE HAWKESBURY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize the outstanding fundraising efforts of the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital Foundation.

On October 3 of this year, a telethon helped raise close to \$380,000 for the purchase of a CT scanner.

L'Hôpital Général de Hawkesbury est un centre hospitalier moderne, bilingue, innovateur et bien aménagé.

Please join me in congratulating M. Jean Sirois, the director of the foundation and organizer of the telethon, along with co-chairs Eva Levesque, Dr Simon McCall and Hugh Brown.

I would also like to thank the co-hosts, Tanya Lapointe from Radio-Canada, Gaetan Pilon and Johanne Nolin, as well as well-known violinist Bobby Lalonde.

J'aimerais aussi remercier les groupes et personnes suivants pour leurs contributions exceptionnelles :

Les amis et les bénévoles de l'Hôpital Général de Hawkesbury pour leur disposition de 50 000 \$;

M^{me} Drova Zvoulum, une ex-patiente de l'hôpital, pour son don de 50 000 \$;

L'Association d'investissement industriel de Hawkesbury pour leur don de 25 000 \$; et

La Fondation de la famille Robert Campeau pour leur donation de 25 000 \$.

I congratulate everyone who helped make this telethon a success and who made possible the purchase of the CT scanner.

Je suis fier de mes commettants et mes commettantes de la région de Hawkesbury.

Long live the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital.

MEMBERS' CONDUCT

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Mr Speaker, I haven't seen Mr Tory around here lately.

Now, I know he said that being here was at the bottom of his list of priorities, as he stated in Tandem News, but I'm sure he'd be interested to know that things seem to be falling apart in his absence.

Last night, as I'm sure you're well aware, Mr Speaker, was a clear example of just how far down the rabbit hole of disorganization this PC caucus has fallen. Who's running the show? Is it John Tory, or is it the member from Oak Ridges? All told, the member called for adjournment of the debate three times, leaving the division bell ringing for an hour and a half. Clearly, the opposition isn't interested in debating. That is irresponsible opposition.

When his first motion to adjourn debate was passed, neither he nor his party's whip seemed to have an idea of what was going on. They were completely unprepared to debate the subsequent bill. However, leading the charge,

he continued to blunder along, debating the previous bill he'd called to adjourn. I'd really like to know who is running the show over there, Mr Speaker, because whoever it is was sure dropping the ball last night.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I rise today to express my displeasure with the shenanigans by the members of the New Democratic Party. For a party that advocates on the side of the worker, that was certainly not evident in the House last night.

Last night in this House, we attempted to debate Bill 63, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, an act which, if passed, would eliminate the 60-hour workweek. Bill 63 would give back workers the right to work for no more than 48 hours a week unless the workers had agreed to do so in writing.

The national representative of the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, Joe McCabe, has said about Bill 63 that "it will bring more fairness to workers in general." But what happened last night? The NDP voted in favour of adjourning the debate. Clearly, the opposition is not interested in debating. Instead of working with our government to help the working men and women in Ontario, they're playing politics with the lives of those Ontarians, just like happened in June when they blocked the passage of the family medical leave act over franking privileges, forcing the recall of this House, a move with a cost to the taxpayers of more than \$100,000.

But then again, what can one expect from a party that in 1990 campaigned on the promise to rebalance labour relations and then introduced the social contract, which was the largest single violation of workers' rights in the history of this province?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for

democratic renewal): I'll make comments during ministers' statements, Mr Speaker.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PIT BULLS

LE PIT-BULL

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I rise today to introduce legislation that, if passed, would ban pit bulls in the province of Ontario.

This action responds to the growing alarm of Ontarians over the aggressiveness and danger of these dogs; the danger that these dogs pose to public safety; the danger that these dogs pose to other animals; and the imperilling of the safety of our streets, our parks and our communities.

This is real; it is not just fear. It is fear based upon real harm caused by pit bulls against animals and victims.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bryant: I hear from the opposition something about fearmongering. I'd like him to say that to some of the victims who are in the gallery here today who have been attacked by pit bulls. This is real, and we are going to protect Ontarians in the province of Ontario.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I just ask that the members in the gallery please do not applaud.

Hon Mr Bryant: Pit bulls have been responsible for some horribly vicious attacks on Ontarians. Since August, barely a week goes by where there's not another pit bull attack reported in the media, and my experience has been that there are many, many incidents that simply go unreported: a child playing, a man going out for an evening stroll, an infant being pushed along in a stroller, a family enjoying some peace and quiet in their backyard—all of these circumstances and more—a woman delivering mail to a house. It goes on and on, and we see the incidents and we see the damage done and we see the fear that it causes and we see that people don't go to certain areas or parks and streets because of this.

This government is saying enough is enough. It's time that we make amendments to the Dog Owners' Liability Act that make our streets safer. Ontario breeders would not be allowed to breed them. Future purchase and imports of pit bulls would be banned if this bill passes. There will be strict new requirements for people already owning pit bulls, though they won't be new for the responsible dog owner, because a responsible dog owner is already leashing and muzzling their pit bull. We are just requiring that all dog owners of pit bulls act responsibly.

Let me be clear, and this is important: Those who currently own pit bulls will, of course, be able to keep their dogs. We have said that all along. Under the regulations, each existing pit bull would also have to be leashed and muzzled when in public. The pit bull would also have to be neutered or spayed. Municipalities will be able to prescribe additional requirements in their own bylaws to reflect citizen concerns.

Our government recognizes that most dog owners are very responsible. Unfortunately, there are irresponsible dog owners in this province as well. This proposed legislation would forestall potential attacks by prosecuting owners of any dogs—any dogs—that pose a menace to society. An owner of any dangerous dog that bites, attacks or otherwise poses a menace to public safety could be subject to fines of up to \$10,000, and for the first time, a jail term of up to six months. The legislation would also allow fines up to a maximum of \$60,000 for corporations who own such dogs. The court would also be able to order the owner to pay restitution to the victim.

Notre gouvernement est résolu à édifier, dans tout l'Ontario, des collectivités fortes, à l'abri du danger. L'interdiction des pit-bulls répond justement à un besoin urgent de sécurité publique. Si cette loi était adoptée, les pit-bulls seraient bannis en Ontario.

We've seen positive results from similar bans in other jurisdictions. The most relevant and telling is the Canadian experience: 14 years ago, Winnipeg became the first Canadian city to ban pit bulls. Winnipeg was experiencing over 30 serious reported pit bull attacks a year; today, zero. Kitchener saw 18 pit bull attacks a year, and in a few short years since the ban came in, thanks to the leadership of their mayor and to Councillor Berry Vrbancovic, who is in the gallery today, they now have about one pit bull attack a year in Kitchener.

This means that people in those cities who otherwise would be subject to the repeated attacks of pit bulls are instead spared serious injury, and the same goes for their pets. Even more interestingly, dog bites in Winnipeg went down over the course of the pit bull ban, refuting the hypothesis that pit bull owners will turn to other dangerous dogs. Similarly, in Kitchener, no other breed has filled the gap left by banned pit bulls.

In Ontario, in addition to Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor has a ban in place, and Brantford is moving toward one after its city council voted to ban pit bulls. Toronto is re-examining the issue following a recent and particularly horrifying attack, as are other municipalities.

I've heard from municipal leaders from Windsor to Wawa, all asking for the provincial government to show leadership on this public safety issue, and your government is answering that call today. I'm thinking of people like Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr, who said, "Every Ontarian in every city across Ontario deserves the same level of safety that we have in Kitchener. That's what this legislation would do."

Toronto Mayor David Miller has said that he supports the province's swift action. He said, "This problem is not exclusive to any single municipality; it is a province-

wide issue and therefore the best solution is a province-wide strategy to keep Ontarians safe from dangerous dogs."

Mayor Rod Morrison from Wawa has said, "Protecting the public from the menace of pit bulls and toughening up on owners of dangerous dogs that attack is in the best interest of all people in every town, city and community across Ontario."

Chief Fantino has said, "This proposed ban will help my officers and police services across Ontario keep our community safe from dangerous dogs."

Ontario municipalities are speaking out. They're saying they don't want a patchwork of pit bull bans across Ontario. They need province-wide leadership so there is not one level of public safety in one area and one level of public safety in another. Instead, what we need to have across the province is the kind of safety these mayors and leaders have shown and that this government is attempting here in this Legislature today.

There is support across the province. It's not unanimous support, but let's hear about some of it. This is from the Hamilton Spectator: "The broader public interest is well served by the proposed ban." The London Free Press said, "We've seen enough," and it's time for a ban on pit bulls. The Toronto Star said it's time to ban pit bulls. Jim Coyle wrote, "Amen to the ban on pit bulls." Toronto Sun columnist Bob MacDonald said it's "doing the right thing to ban pit bulls in Ontario." The Globe and Mail said, "...implementing the ban will be difficult. Public safety is worth the effort. It's a move long overdue." The National Post said the "suggested ban should be enacted."

With this legislation, our government would set the province-wide standard and eliminate the need for a patchwork of municipal bans. We would be the first province or state across the continent to put this ban in place. I believe we are showing leadership here, and it is to the safety of all Ontarians. While municipalities would maintain principal authority for dog control, as they do, the province will ensure that all Ontarians will receive uniform protection. This will protect municipal authorities while protecting Ontarians. I thank municipal leaders for their support.

We are continuing discussions with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and with the city of Toronto to ensure that working together will make the proposed ban work effectively for all.

The reaction to this debate has been overwhelming. I've received more than 5,000—almost 6,000—e-mails and letters about pit bulls. The message is clear: A majority clearly support pit bull bans. Hearing from the public was a really powerful and influential factor in the decision to ban pit bulls. Clearly, there are many unreported pit bull incidents, and clearly, there is not just fear over it, but justified fear. There is a great silent majority that is being heard on this issue and their government is listening.

That said, it was a compelling debate. I heard from all sides. I met with municipal authorities, police officers,

animal experts, groups like the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I met with national coalitions representing humane societies, veterinarians and animal control experts. I met with victims and with citizens, those great non-experts who are all experts about dogs. We've heard first-hand the accounts of many victims and the suffering experienced by their families.

I want to acknowledge and thank some people who courageously came here to Queen's Park, who have been waiting, for a long time in some cases, for this ban to be put in place, if this should pass: Darlene Wagner, Angela Joyce, Karl Vaartjes, Steven and his daughter Lindsay Grandy, Louise Ellis and her daughter Lauren, Maria De Zorzi, Diana Fischer and George Gooderham; as well, sitting in the gallery is Councillor Berry Vrbanovic, who has been a real leader in this. Thank you to all of you for coming here today.

So we've heard from the victims, we've heard from those who were opposed to pit bull bans and we've heard from the people of Ontario. This debate comes to this House as this province considers whether it will be the first to ban pit bulls, in Ontario. I would say to all honourable members in this House that I don't think any of us want to open our morning paper and see yet another picture of a young child who has been harmed, a pet who has been harmed, resulting in a pit bull being put down. We've seen enough, and enough is enough. It's time for action.

The Speaker: Response?

1400

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I wish to express, from our party, our sympathy to the victims of dog attacks, and share the desire to stop attacks in future, but we have concerns about how the Attorney General went about developing this piece of legislation.

My office has received dozens of e-mails, and almost everyone agrees that action must be taken to prevent innocent people from being attacked by dogs. Everyone is asking, what constitutes a pit bull? Experts say that the pit bull is really a breed unto itself, but refer to a number of breeds, crossbreeds, hybrids, etc.

For the purpose of enforcing this politically charged ban, how does one determine what is a pit bull? Who will be responsible for making the determination and will it stand up in court? There are people who suggest the government is taking this strong stand on pit bulls not because it feels the law will be enforceable, but because it will convince people it is taking action on a serious problem. Many pit bulls, or for that matter dogs in general, are not registered, especially in rural areas. When someone sees an unleashed dog, they might think, is it a pit bull? Who do they call? Assuming someone catches the dog, what happens next?

Many municipalities in Ontario do not have facilities to detain stray animals. Some have financial arrangements with the SPCA shelters, run principally by volunteer organizations, but these groups often operate on

shoestring budgets and can't be expected to take on the responsibility of dealing with a huge influx of what your government refers to as dangerous animals. Minister, you'll have to explain to us how this ban you propose will be effective and enforceable to protect the public.

Early this morning in Toronto a 28-year-old man is recuperating from serious injuries to his hand and arm after being attacked by a dog. While police are still investigating, this report appears to support your call for a ban on pit bulls. Well, not quite. The dog involved was not a pit bull; it was a Rottweiler.

Pet owners and animal experts believe a ban on pit bulls will be just the start, that more breeds will be added as other dog attacks are reported. Over time, you might be able to include every breed in the ban. Banning the pit bull breed will not protect the public from other aggressive breeds such as Rottweilers and Dobermans. My own experience is of having being bitten by a dog in the hand as a young child, by a German shepherd. Are we going to ban that dog also? What will be the criteria in the future for banning other breeds?

In Italy, they have banned in excess of 90 breeds, and it has not solved the problem of dangerous dogs. The Attorney General says this comprehensive approach of a provincial ban will avoid a patchwork of bans by municipalities. Municipalities, I would argue, are capable of determining their community's safety, and were acting; for example, the city of Windsor. What municipalities need are the tools to do the job. Muzzling and leashing pit bulls or other dangerous dogs in public is warranted, but will not protect victims from dogs that bolt from their owner's house or property and attack a human being or other creature. Police will not charge criminally unless it be proven that the dog owner was negligent.

An example is that no charges were laid by the OPP in a recent pit bull attack where the dog bolted from a house, killing a small dog, because they could not prove owner's negligence. The Dog Owners' Liability Act does not impose strict liability offences on a dog owner whose dog bites, attacks or poses a threat to public safety. There is always the defence of due diligence, so heavier fines and jailing of dog owners are meaningless tools to protect the public if a dog owner cannot be held accountable under the law for their dog's actions.

I would say to the Attorney General that this is another example of your seat-of-the-pants approach to government. This is ill thought out, you didn't consult and you don't know how it will be policed or what it will cost. Admit it, Minister: this is a public relations show designed to give people the impression that you are doing something and to get your mug on TV.

I will say this to you, Mr Attorney General: This bill should go to committee. You should face the public in terms of what you are trying to do. Make sure that it's enforceable and that you're accountable to the public. The people in this audience here today deserve to know that this is not a sham, that they will be protected.

We have sympathy for anyone who has been bitten by a dog. We want to make sure they are protected by the

law. We don't want this to be no more than the public relations exercise it already is. Do the job, Minister: Respect the public and protect them.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to offer the government that we in the official opposition would certainly be prepared to give unanimous consent to waive the printing of this bill and to begin debating it this afternoon, if you'd like.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I don't think there's unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, government House leader. Unanimous consent means all, and I heard a no. Response from the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill purports to address what we all acknowledge as a very serious problem, a problem that has taken its toll of victims, not only across Ontario but throughout North America. I have no hesitation in acknowledging that. Our exposure to this is primarily anecdotal and I think it's fair to say that the information we receive through the news media is perhaps but the tip of the iceberg. I say to this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'll give you your time. I'm just going to say that when the Attorney General was reading his statement, it was quiet, people were polite and they were listening. Now the response from the member for Niagara Centre is not receiving the same courtesy. I ask the member from Niagara Centre to respond.

Mr Kormos: This is a serious problem that warrants serious consideration in a disciplined way in the context of this chamber and the rules and procedure of this chamber. It's far too important a matter for anybody to attempt to short-circuit the process. It's far too important a matter to folks across this province, to ensure that there is a full debate, that there is a thorough and intelligent consideration of all the data and evidence.

I don't doubt the sincerity of the people who advocate this bill as it stands now, and I would ask them not to doubt the sincerity of those who want to ensure that whatever legislation is eventually passed in this province is the most effective law, with enforceability and the capacity to have a meaningful impact on vicious dogs and attacks by vicious dogs, be they pit bulls or be they others.

I tell you, there has been serious conflict and contradictory statements made about who has and who hasn't been consulted. I'm not in a position—nor would I want to at this point—to identify any of the parties as being anything less than truthful from their particular perspective. But I'm concerned about the letter that appeared in this morning's Toronto Star from the president of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, one Tim Zaharchuk, who says that organization wasn't consulted.

I'm concerned there's a suggestion—a number of columnists and journalists have been cited—that for as many as there are who support the ban being proposed and the manner it's being proposed, there are an equal

number of observers and journalists who express concerns. I'm concerned about the observation that the US Centers for Disease Control has not been adequately consulted. I'm concerned about the observation that the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has not been consulted, that the Canada Safety Council has not been effectively consulted. The people of this province deserve to hear from those parties, deserve to know what the data are, so that we as legislators can develop the best possible legislative response to, I repeat, this most serious problem.

1410

We believe as well that this matter should go to public hearings. There ought to be public committee hearings so that all parties can express their views, so that there could be a public airing of the data and the evidence and so that there can be a legitimate consideration of the effect of breed-specific bans in other jurisdictions.

I'm concerned about the conflicting reports about the effectiveness of the breed-specific bans in the United Kingdom. I'm concerned about the conflicting reports coming about places like Cincinnati or Denver, where there is some suggestion that breed bans were attempted, failed and then abandoned; if they have been, we want to understand why. If there are better ways to approach this than the manner in which this legislation does it, then we're prepared to work together to ensure that that better way is implemented.

We're concerned about municipalities and their ability to enforce this legislation. It's quite clear this is legislation that has to be enforced at the municipal level. Down where I come from, and in fact across this province, municipalities are hard-pressed to keep animal control officers on duty any more than five days a week, eight hours a day. To have a breed ban or a vicious dog ban in general is meaningless unless you've got people out there prepared to do the hard, nasty and dirty work in terms of picking up this breed.

Also, the bill clearly provides for at least one more decade of so-called pit bulls in Ontario. We're talking about the so-called grandparenting. I understand why the government would want to include that in their legislation, but I very much want to understand how that jibes with their expression of such serious concern with this one specific breed.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the spirit of co-operation that has been offered, I seek unanimous consent to put a motion, without further debate, that when this bill is called, any time this bill is called, no party can put a motion to adjourn the House or adjourn the debate without unanimous consent.

The Speaker: The government House leader put a motion forward to have unanimous consent. Do I hear unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): You're an idiot.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Toronto-Danforth has used unparliamentary language. Would you stand and withdraw.

Ms Churley: I withdraw, Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the members to recognize constituents of mine, Chester and Grace Baarda, and their son, Ted, who are joining us in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

It's time now for oral questions. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the absence—

The Speaker: I would ask for your indulgence for a second. Let me take a moment before we start question period to recognize Brian Coburn, a former member for Ottawa-Orléans who was part of the 37th Parliament. Welcome.

Sorry about that.

Mr Runciman: A very justifiable interruption, Mr Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I'll direct my questions to the Acting Premier.

Minister, when your government introduced the Liberal health tax in May, you maintained it was not a tax, it was a premium. You claimed your government hadn't broken your promise not to raise taxes on hard-working families. In May in this House, the Minister of Finance said, "The budget included an Ontario health premium. It is not linked to the rates of personal income tax. It's a unique, hybrid premium." We now know that to be false.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance repeated three times in response to my question, and I'm quoting, "The Ontario health premium is an individual tax levied under the income tax system of the province, and it remains a personal obligation of individuals."

Dalton McGuinty looked people in the eye last year and said, "I will not raise your taxes." This is such an obvious flip-flop, it's astonishing, even for a Liberal. People have lost faith in the word of your Premier. People are justifiably cynical about any of the promises made by Dalton McGuinty. Who's right, Mr Sorbara or Mr McGuinty? Do you continue to maintain this is a tax or is it a premium?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): There have been numerous

statements by the finance minister, starting in the lock-up at the presentation of the budget where this was described as a tax. That has been the position of the budget. It started prior to the introduction of the budget. That was during the lock-up that occurred in the Whitney Block, and I believe the opposition were present in that lock-up. That was followed by a statement in the House which was, in turn, followed by a number of statements that clearly reaffirmed that this was, in fact, a tax.

Now, the finance minister said yesterday—and it's entirely correct—that it was not related to the Income Tax Act, as the member indicated. But I think the government has been clear on this matter right from the beginning, starting in the media lock-up, followed by the budget speech, followed by the budget motion, followed by the debate on the budget, that this in fact was a tax.

Mr Runciman: Now we have it confirmed that the Premier wasn't straight with the people of Ontario about raising taxes.

Minister, this speaks to the very competence of your government and of Dalton McGuinty. You've implemented a tax that hits personal pocketbooks hard after you said you wouldn't raise taxes. But what's more galling is that you guys can't even break a promise without getting it wrong. We have an arbitrator's ruling that shows a public sector employer will now have to pay the health care premium on behalf of its employees. Once one union wins this right for its employees, it will become a pattern for future labour negotiations. How will you act to protect the rights of all taxpayers, so that hard-working taxpayers are not forced by your legislative screw-up to not only pay their own Liberal health tax, but also pay the freight for public sector workers? How will you do that?

Hon Mr Duncan: I would re-emphasize for the member opposite that we, in fact, have conflicting arbitrators' decisions. The Air Canada Jazz decision is precisely the opposite of the one he has referenced.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): He didn't raise that.

Hon Mr Duncan: Yes, and he didn't raise that. There is a right to judicial review. I believe that judicial review will occur, and I believe the judicial review will confirm the position of the government at this point. We have to wait and see. The position of the government has been clear. We see this as a tax. We have conflicting arbitrators' decisions. We await the decision of a competent court of jurisdiction.

Mr Runciman: I'm glad the minister raised the issue of the court's involvement here. Clearly you have an option: Either you can demonstrate leadership and clarify that this is a personal tax that must be paid by all taxpayers, or you can continue to stumble down the path of broken promises, blindly hoping that other arbitrators and court decisions don't rule that some taxpayers have to pay the premium and others don't, and that isn't difficult. It's a basic test of competence.

In the absence of direction from your government—and you've confirmed that that direction isn't there

today—will you at least intervene in all such cases that go before the courts in order to ensure that you don't create a two-tier taxpayer system?

Hon Mr Duncan: We demonstrated leadership by beginning to address the problems they created in the health care system. You want to talk about broken promises? What about a \$5.5-billion hidden deficit that your party left this government with?

1420

What we're doing to show leadership is funding 2,400 full-time nursing positions, trying to make up for the abuse and neglect of the health care system under that government. Some 21,000 more Ontarians will receive home care this year as a result of this government's leadership decisions.

The only incompetence was the incompetence of a government that compared nurses to Hula Hoop workers. It was the incompetence of a government that said it wouldn't close hospitals and then closed 39 of them. It was the incompetence of a government that laid off thousands of nurses and then had to spend valuable taxpayers' money on severance to bring them back.

Premier McGuinty and his government are showing the leadership they didn't show. We are showing competence by revealing the true facts around your deficit. We're going to clean up the mess you created and we're doing it expeditiously, in the interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: The minister had better get a new scriptwriter. People are sick and tired of that cop-out. That's what it is—a cop-out. You've been in office for over a year. Check the calendar and start doing your job.

First, your Liberal government said you wouldn't raise personal taxes. Then in May you did, but called it a health premium. Now you say it's a personal tax that must be paid by individual taxpayers. Arbitrators across Ontario are working overtime on cases about just who has to pay the Liberal health tax.

According to the latest labour force survey data from Statistics Canada, one in five people in Ontario works in the public sector. The vast majority of those employees are unionized. That means that 20% of the revenues you intend to collect from your Liberal health tax are in jeopardy. Because of your lack of foresight, public sector employers could be on the hook for \$500 million for contributions on behalf of their employees by the time the next election rolls around.

Minister, if the court upholds this decision, what will you do? What services will you cut to meet a possible \$500-million obligation?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, this government is funding 2,400 full-time nursing positions; 21,000—I repeat, 21,000—more people are receiving home care; 1,600 more front-line staff for long-term care; nine new MRIs; three more repatriated community health care investments, the first time in 12 years; free vaccines for kids; and we're restoring standards for seniors in long-term care.

Nobody tires of the truth. The truth is that this government has moved expeditiously and prudently to address the situation in our health care system, to put the needs of individual Ontarians ahead of the blind partisan attacks this party makes that aren't based on fact. I note too that we now have the lowest unemployment rate since 2001 in this province, and that's part of the entire issue.

Courts of competent jurisdiction will hear appeals on this. We'll await their decision.

Mr Runciman: This is the head-in-the-sand approach to government. The potential cost of public sector employers having to pay this tax is \$500 million by the time the next election rolls around. That's \$500 million that will no longer be available for front-line patient care in our hospitals and long-term-care facilities, money that won't be available for our classrooms. The list is endless.

In your drive to raise taxes, you were dangerously negligent with the details. You didn't do your homework. The potential cost to taxpayers is massive. Not only will some taxpayers have to pay the premium, they'll also have to pay \$500 million for those who don't have to pay. In light of these problems, Minister, will you now admit that your tax was a mistake and scrap this tax?

Hon Mr Duncan: Again, the member opposite conveniently ignores the Jazz airline arbitrator's ruling that says, in fact, this is a tax. That has been the government's consistent position from the beginning, and the position of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. The only group that had their head in the sand was a party that could promise to balance the budget when it left a \$5.5-billion deficit. It's a party that said it could cut corporate taxes at a time when you had a deficit of this size, was a party that laid off nurses, was a party that failed to deal with the crisis that was in front of the people in our hospitals.

We are taking a responsible, prudent position. We have introduced this tax in order to properly fund the new nurses, the new services we need. We believe that in the long term the people of Ontario will see the wisdom of those decisions, and are beginning to understand the positive outcomes of those decisions: better front-line health care, better health services to the people of this province.

Mr Runciman: That's a depressing response from a one-note-Johnny minister. He gets up and says the same thing time after time, despite the gravity of the implications regarding this issue.

Minister, our party leader, John Tory, has promised to scrap the tax when the Progressive Conservatives are elected in 2007. Unlike you, we will keep our promise. You have so badly implemented this tax and have not thought through the obvious consequences. Will you now answer John Tory's challenge and scrap this tax, yes or no?

Hon Mr Duncan: The only thing I would like to hear from John Tory is how he will pay for scrapping the tax. Will John Tory lay off 8,000 nurses the way previous Conservative governments did? John Tory will close

hospitals. John Tory will lay off nurses. John Tory talks a good game, but he doesn't defend his arguments. John Tory has no more credibility on this issue than that bunch over there does, a bunch that said they had a balanced budget, not in the ancient past but in the last fiscal year. John Tory ought to tell the people of Ontario how he will address the health care issues.

The real leader in this province, the real leadership being shown is by Premier Dalton McGuinty for taking the tough choices, making the decisions. We put the health care needs of Ontarians ahead of tax cuts for corporations. We put the education needs of students ahead of private school tax cuts. I challenge John Tory to say how he'll pay for this—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. All across Ontario, people are scrambling to make appointments with their optometrists. That's because, as of Monday, the McGuinty government will cut the eye exams provided by optometrists from OHIP coverage. You are reducing direct access to eye exams, because tens of thousands of people will not be able to meet the McGuinty government's restrictive new conditions, people suffering from eye impairment, vision impairment, people who need help.

Optometrists are primary health care providers. They have an important role to play in sustaining people's health. Patients should have direct access, and that access should be paid for through OHIP. Minister, will you do the right thing and reverse the McGuinty government's cut to optometrist services?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's noteworthy that the honourable member who for five years served in a government that did nothing on an annual basis to increase the amount provided to optometrists, followed by eight years of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I know they don't want to hear. Neither of them wants to be reminded of the fact that from 1989 until 2004, 14 years largely during which these two parties held office in our province, optometrist fees were not increased. As a result of that, our government received an enormous bill for an unfunded liability. The challenges we face as a government—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, I do recommend that you should get lethal injection for yourself.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That's not parliamentary at all, Minister of Health. Would you mind withdrawing?

Order. Let me see if I can get some order into Parliament today.

Minister?

1430

Hon Mr Smitherman: I apologize. I thought the honourable member was heckling that I—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Well, now the people of Ontario have the logic of the McGuinty government. Because optometrists felt that they were underfunded, what the McGuinty government means by "Choose change" is "Cut them altogether."

Here's the McGuinty logic, but it's not just optometrists. Then we have the case of chiropractors. In one month, as of December 1, tens of thousands of Canadians will be cut off from the helpful health care services of chiropractors. Why? Because the McGuinty government is cutting that too. And we know that especially for people who work in the construction industry, the manufacturing industry, having access to a chiropractor is essential if people are to be able to work on an ongoing basis and avoid, in some cases, a lifetime disability. That's why it's absolutely wrong to cut this.

I'll give you another chance, Minister. Will you recognize that the McGuinty government has made a mistake by cutting these services, and will you restore the health care services provided by chiropractors?

Hon Mr Smitherman: With respect to the first question that the honourable member asked, I think it's important to note that governments must have priorities. Ours have been fashioned after a commitment to address key wait times in areas like cardiac and cancer, and to deliver more doctors to communities again after years and years of decline.

With respect to optometry, hundreds of thousands of visits will continue to be funded for people in Ontario. We're making sure that the program we have developed with optometrists in mind is designed to ensure that those people most vulnerable in our society continue to have access to these things, not just young people and not just the elderly, but for people with diseases, with eight classes of disease that have a dramatic impact on the eye, we're enhancing the coverage to an annual visit, where heretofore it's been once every two years. We have made every effort within available resources to make sure that optometry services are designed in a fashion which has provided for those people in our society who are most vulnerable. I think that's the appropriate public policy response.

Mr Hampton: I think it's important to hear from the president of the Ontario Association of Optometrists, who says that in fact there was never a formal consultation process, which explains why "obvious things to us optometrists" do not make sense in what the government is doing. In fact, what the president of the optometrists' association of Ontario says is that literally hundreds of thousands of people need that annual eye exam because it will help protect their health; it will put them in a situation where they can avoid getting more serious afflictions, afflictions that will put them in hospital, afflictions that will result in surgery. That's what you're cutting.

You claim to be a health care government, but in fact this cut makes no sense, because if you follow it down the road a couple of years, it results in more costs for the health care system. So while you talk about transformational change, Minister, here's your opportunity to protect services that really matter to people. Will you stop the cuts to chiropractors, the cuts to optometrists' services, cuts that don't make any sense?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I do think it's important to keep in perspective the broad range of investments that our government is making with respect to health care. I recognize, of course, there are challenges there. There are obviously, Mr Speaker, every single day, initiatives that we wish we had more resources to provide for. But in keeping with our desire to drive more resources to the community level, we made a \$103-million investment in home care this year, a \$400-million investment in long-term care this year, \$600 million over four years to deliver more doctors into local communities—essential, obviously, to a well-functioning health care system; significant new volumes related to five key areas, including MRIs and CTs, access to cataract care that's enhanced, hips and knees, cardiac and cancer.

I take my honourable member's point, of course. I recognize there are challenges we have that we are not addressing as fully as we would like, but I think it's important to recognize we have made an almost \$2.2-billion investment in the expansion of health care services as a dedication and commitment to the people in the province of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: What we see is health care services that matter to people, health care services that make a real difference in people's lives, health care services that can help them sustain their health rather than become more seriously ill, that you're cutting.

Meanwhile, you spend \$200 million of the new health tax on sewer pipe. And as we saw yesterday, you spend \$15 million of the new health tax on a promotional campaign.

Explain it to me. You've got new money under the health tax, people are paying more, but they're getting services cut. Can you explain the logic of that to all those people who are losing their optometrist services, who are losing their chiropractic services and who stand to lose their physiotherapist services? Why are they paying more, watching the new health tax money go to sewer pipe, and you're cutting the health care services that really matter to them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's important to remind Ontarians—although I think they know rather well by now—if you talk about a health care service that is fundamentally important to Ontarians, it is access to a doctor in your local community.

And it was that party, while in government, that shut down medical schools because they felt that the appro-

priate way to deal with health care in the province of Ontario was to stop doctors from practising. This is the party that, while in government, cut funding for the Ontario drug benefit one year. This is the party that, while in government, for two or three years running cut funding to Ontario's hospitals. This is the party that, while in government, cut funding for OHIP services like access to doctors in our local communities.

I stand behind a government plan that has invested \$2.2 billion in the expansion of essential services to make them more available to people in local communities. And all across the province, communities are seeing these benefits every single day.

Mr Hampton: Well, the Minister of Health, rather than answer the question, wants to pretend he can give the people of Ontario a history lesson. I want to remind the Minister of Health it was a Liberal government in 1993 and 1994 that said to health ministers across the country, "There are too many doctors; start cutting medical school places." The Chrétien government, Paul Martin, remember them? It was Paul Martin who, in the 1994 budget, cut health care funding and put every province in a difficult spot.

But I want to return to today. I want to return to the issues this health minister is so desperate to avoid. You've got \$2 billion in your budget squirreled away in contingency funds; you're going to take \$6.5 million in the new health tax out of people's pockets every day; you've got \$825 million of new federal money; you've got over \$4 billion. Why are you cutting chiropractors? Why are you cutting physiotherapists? Why are you cutting optometrists?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I find it very interesting that the honourable member's using the defence, "Some other level of government told us to do it." In the face of all of the evidence about Ontario being a growing population, this member clings to the idea that someone told him to do it. I wonder what other kind of advice he's following on that basis—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm having difficulty hearing the Minister of Health because of the noise coming from the opposition.

Interjections.

Order. Let me give the member from Toronto-Danforth a moment to vent.

Minister of Health?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm pleased to stand behind those commitments that we've been able to fulfill on behalf of Ontarians: In very sharp contrast to that party while in government, this year alone, an additional \$250 million in the Ontario drug benefit to give Ontarians the access to those drugs which enhance the quality of their life.

Our government's budget stands behind better health, delivering a better health care system to the people of Ontario, and we have put \$2.161 billion in my ministry alone in evidence of those very clear priorities.

1440

Mr Hampton: The minister talks about all the wonderful things the McGuinty government promised. But I talk to those frail seniors, people who are disabled, people who have to rely upon Ontario Works, and what they know is that you've told the doctors, "You pry \$200 million in drug benefits away from the poorest, the disabled and the frail elderly." People who need that eye exam are being told, "You pay for it out of your own pocket now. And if you can't afford it, that's too bad." People who need a chiropractor and who need to look after an injured back so they can go to work are being told by the McGuinty government, "You pay out of your own pocket."

Minister, tell me, how is it that you, the government that advertises itself as a health care government, go around and pick on the frail elderly, the poor, the disabled, injured workers, people who suffer from vision impairment? How is that improving health care for all of these ordinary Ontario citizens?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member likes to talk about the frail elderly—73,000 residents in our long-term-care facilities currently enjoying the benefit of a \$191-million injection of new money to hire 2,000 new staff.

The honourable member likes to talk about people on Ontario Works, who continue to be part of those hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who will soon receive access they need to the optometry services which are critical to them.

This is evidence that, within the available resources, we make our priorities and we stand by them because they're important priorities for the people of Ontario. Communities all across this province, totalling now 142, do not enjoy the benefit of enough physicians at the local level.

They stood by and waited and waited and did not reverse the terrible decision made by that party while in government. But we have stood up for those communities, and we're working hard to produce more doctors in local communities. The element of success of family practice revitalized is a tremendous commitment that we make to the people of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the member for Etobicoke North apologize for saying audibly—many of us heard him during question period—referring to me and my comments, "OK, the hot flash is over." I would ask for an apology—

The Speaker: Order. I did not hear the member, but—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. If the member felt that he had said something unparliamentary, I would ask him to withdraw. But I did not hear him.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Speaker, I believe you said, "I will give the member opportunity to—"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member from Etobicoke North to withdraw.

Mr Qaadri: I withdraw.

PIT BULLS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, today you made good on your intention to ban pit bulls in Ontario. With the recent number of serious attacks by pit bulls, your bill will be welcomed in many quarters. Banning pit bulls may be a prudent step for your government, but the lack of details of your plan has raised serious concerns.

My question is, Minister, that once your government has passed legislation banning pit bulls, who gets the responsibility to enforce this new law? Will it be a newly created provincial force with expertise in dogs, or will it be the Ministry of Natural Resources, or municipalities, or the SPCA? And the really tough one, Minister: Who's going to pay for it?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): With respect, I'd say to the member, I would not presume as to what this Legislature will do with this bill. I will say that I have been working very closely with the city of Toronto and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and I have spoken very directly to a number of mayors and councillors across the province to deal with this issue.

Yes, municipalities, of course, have a very, very important role to play when it comes to the regulation of dogs. At the same time, I've got the message loud and clear, that the municipalities do not want a patchwork approach to the pit bull issue. They want to have a province-wide strategy, so that's what we're doing.

We're working with the municipalities. We're working with the SPCA. That's why I sat down with the Ontario association, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That's why we're working with the humane societies. That's why we're meeting with veterinary associations.

I guess my question to the Attorney General critic is quite simply this: I got the impression that you didn't support this bill. Do you support the bill or not, sir?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Tascona: Minister, many organizations with expertise in dogs, including the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association—the OVMA—attempted to meet with you to discuss your proposed ban. Your parliamentary assistant wrote a letter to the Toronto Star denying reports that you had refused to meet with them.

Today, in the same newspaper, the OVMA president revealed a letter was sent to you, the Attorney General, on September 15. A month later, on October 15, the same day you announced your decision to ban pit bulls, the OVMA received a faxed letter from you stating that your schedule did not permit them to meet with this organization.

This is another example of your seat-of-the-pants approach to government. This is ill thought out. You didn't consult, and you don't know how it will be policed and how much it will cost. Admit it, Minister: This is a public relations show designed to give people the impression you are doing something and getting your mug on TV. What are you going to do to protect the public?

Hon Mr Bryant: You tell those victims in this gallery that this is a public relations exercise. This is real—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I presume you want to respond.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): No, we don't. That's a bunch of crap.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's all just settle down now.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we just all settle down for a moment now. Let's proceed with question period in a very civil way.

Hon Mr Bryant: I'm actually very happy to be given the opportunity to talk about the level of consultation that we undertook. In a very, very short period of time, we were able to get all sides of the issue, very openly.

The cameras were all there, and everybody saw that I met with the National Companion Animal Coalition, a membership that includes the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Canadian Veterinary Association, the Canadian Kennel Club, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and agricultural. I met with animal control officials, a representative of the Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society, and the OSPCA, Cat and Jack K9 Safety, dog trainer, author and behavioural consultant, Toronto police canine unit, Kitchener-Waterloo police. I received submissions from the Ontario Veterinarian Medical Association. We considered their submissions. We spoke with them in September and October, and then there were follow-up meetings.

I'm running out of time. We did so much consulting—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Acting Premier. Minister, your government's been asleep at the wheel when it comes to protecting consumers from auto insurance rate hikes. First, you broke your promise to cut rates by 20%, and now we find out that you're giving the green light to secret kickbacks that are driving insurance rates up even higher. Brokers who play ball with big insurance get secret bonuses, kickbacks on top of the 12.5% to 20% commission they're already charging.

Who pays? Well, it's drivers and homeowners, that's who. Last year the scam cost Canadians \$290 million, and you're turning a blind eye. Will you ban that scam and protect drivers and homeowners? Are you going to let big insurance and insurance brokers continue to rip off

drivers to the tune of millions of their hard-earned dollars?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Hon Dwight Duncan: This government is moving to strengthen regulation in the province to make insurance more affordable and available, and most importantly, to protect consumers. Thanks to our reform, auto insurance rates are coming down in Ontario for the first time in years, which will result in a more competitive market.

Rates were increasing by 43% over three years under the previous government and they did nothing. We've now cut rates by 8.75%. In addition, the insurance industry reports that the average premium is 12% cheaper than it was in November. Some people have already realized savings, and others may do so when they next renew.

We have brought stability to the system after years of skyrocketing rates. Consumers should always shop around. This government is moving to protect the interests of consumers, and we pledge to continue those efforts.

1450

Mr Kormos: That's little comfort to drivers paying premiums that are higher than they've ever been before and that have failed to be reduced by never mind 20%, by 10% or even 1% or 2%. Theresa Courneyea, head of the consumer interest alliance, says that Ontario brokers have "a financial incentive to do certain things that ... may not be in the best interests of the consumer. [They have] a conflict of interest between [their] interests and [their] clients' interests." In plain English, that means that in this kickback scam, insurance companies are giving brokers cash bonuses to rip off drivers. And you're turning a blind eye.

Stand up and tell auto insurance premium payers, tell homeowner premium payers, that you're going to protect them, that you'll ban the scam. Or are you simply going to let big insurance and their brokers continue to rip off drivers to the tune of millions of dollars of hard-earned bucks?

Hon Mr Duncan: Let me correct the record. It is completely inaccurate to suggest that we've turned a blind eye. In fact, our government has asked the regulator, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, for a report on insurance practices here. Based on that report, if the government needs to consider further actions, we will.

That being said, this government thinks more disclosure is always a good thing. Whether it's in business or government finance, transparency is what keeps our insurance marketplace competitive. We want auto insurance to be more transparent to consumers so that they can make themselves aware about what's in their policy. Brokers should always find the best rates for their clients, and we think that companies and brokers should be providing as much disclosure as possible.

Three insurance companies, ING Canada, Sun Life and Manulife have already said they'll be reviewing their

practices with regard to contingent commissions. I have every confidence that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario will take whatever steps are necessary if any insurer doing business in this province is not abiding by the provisions of the Insurance Act.

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED ENGINEERS

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Internationally trained engineers represent the largest group of internationally trained professionals entering our province. Several of these individuals have also faced hurdles in gaining access to the engineering profession in their new chosen home of Ontario. We have heard that a lack of Canadian work experience is one of the greatest barriers that these individuals face. It's a never-ending cycle of no Canadian work experience, no job; no job, no Canadian work experience.

I understand that as part of an announcement you made this morning, our government is doing something to address this dilemma that internationally trained engineers face. Can you please explain how you are addressing this work experience issue for internationally trained engineers?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm really pleased with the progress that we are making with regulators and, specifically, today's announcement with Professional Engineers Ontario. They will be working with us and with our college system to develop a course that internationally trained individuals will be able to take, which will qualify as an option for the 12-month Canadian work experience requirement that they currently have for permanent licences. I want to congratulate Professional Engineers Ontario for their very progressive action in this regard.

Mr McNeely: I know that internationally trained engineers lose precious time in their home country as they wait to emigrate to Canada. I've heard that before arriving in Canada, many of these individuals do not have a clear idea of how the licensing process works for the engineering profession. They also do not have a sense of how their credentials and skills will be assessed once they reach Ontario. How does your announcement today address this issue?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The internationally trained individuals who are applying to come to Ontario do not currently have enough information on what's expected of them to obtain licensure in their profession. This morning's announcement includes a \$2-million investment over two years, which will help in the development of an international portal that will provide labour market information and skills assessment. It will be interactive, providing the opportunity for coaching and mentoring. This is a portal that will be developed with the professional engineers of Ontario. It starts at the beginning of the process, so it provides individuals in their home

countries with the opportunity to understand what's expected of them and to start to work toward achieving their licences.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety, the minister responsible for fire services in Ontario. I have recently received a copy of a letter sent to a double-hatter firefighter, a professional firefighter in Stratford, who serves as a volunteer firefighter in the township of Perth East in the riding of Perth-Middlesex, right next door to mine. The letter, which I shared with the minister last week, as he will recall, is from the local president of his firefighters' union in Stratford. It is a threatening letter demanding that this firefighter resign as a volunteer firefighter in three to six months. It goes on to suggest that there will be consequences if he doesn't resign.

This firefighter has asked me to protect his confidentiality, so I will not mention his name. If he refuses to resign as a volunteer, the consequences he faces will no doubt involve more threats, more harassment, possibly charges and possibly expulsion from the union, which could lead to the loss of his full-time position, solely because he serves as a volunteer in his home community. This is the kind of thing that's been happening across the province for the last couple of years. Will the minister tell this House if the government condones these heavy-handed threats, yes or no?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for his question. This is an issue he is very passionate about, and I understand that. I also understand that when you were the government, you brought forward a bill and your own party would not support it. As a matter of fact, four members of your caucus right now voted against it. I just want you to know that I am totally committed to make sure that fire safety is something that is intact and that we provide safety for the community. I support volunteers. Notwithstanding that, there's no question this is a difficult issue. When you had the opportunity—you were on the government side—your own party did not support it.

All I'm saying is that we are working to make sure we have some co-operation between the municipalities, the professional firefighters and the volunteers to see if we can come to a solution through the collective bargaining process.

Mr Arnott: I must express utter disappointment at the minister's response. For the record, when Bill 30 was voted upon at third reading, a full two-thirds of our government caucus supported the bill on a free vote. If this continues to be the government's position, then the right to volunteer in Ontario will be rendered void and meaningless, and public safety in our smaller communities and countryside will be diminished. These skilled and trained volunteers who work to provide emergency protection to their neighbours will be removed as the

union gradually eliminates the remaining double-hatters while the government sticks its collective head in the sand.

I want to inform the House of the response of municipal councils in Ontario. Since the spring of this year, 165 municipal councils have passed resolutions in support of double-hatter firefighters and insisted the government take steps to protect them. These are from Conservative ridings, current Liberal-held ridings, NDP ridings, and include the county of Wellington, the town of Halton Hills and the second-largest city in the province, the city of Ottawa, which of course is partly represented by the MPP for Ottawa South, the Premier of Ontario.

How can the government dismiss the views of 165 municipal councils on this issue of public safety? When will the government express public support for the principle of Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Minister.

1500

Hon Mr Kwinter: I find it interesting that the member talks about the support he had in his caucus. You were the government. If you had that support, why didn't they pass the bill?

The other thing is, Bill 52—and again, I commend the member for trying to get a resolution to this thing—doesn't go far enough. It doesn't solve all of the problems that are out there. I can tell you this: Right now, the fire marshal is keeping a very close watch on what is happening. We will make sure that communities are not in harm's way as a result of it, and we will do whatever we have to do to resolve it.

APOLOGY

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your indulgence, I would like to stand in my place now and issue a full and unequivocal apology to the MPP for Toronto-Danforth and any others I have offended. What I said was wrong, inappropriate and beneath the dignity of this assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOTEL CLOSING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, the Inn on the Park announced that it is closing. One hundred fifty workers, or more, will lose their jobs. All of them are low-paid. Most of them are women and most of them are immigrants. These workers need your help. Most are not eligible for employment insurance. Instead, it seems your ministry is giving them the cold shoulder.

Later this afternoon, I am going to the closing wake party for the Hospitality Workers Resource Centre. This centre is exactly the kind of lifeline that the Inn on the Park people need. It's a one-stop shopping centre where

they can get the help to rebuild their lives and the services they need. Just when workers need this help the most, you are cutting them off and shutting them down and shutting down the centre. The Minister of Tourism attended the centre's grand opening less than a year ago. Will you come with me tonight to the closing to see what you are causing?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Beaches-East York for his question. It gives me the opportunity, first of all, to express my very sincere sympathies to the people who are affected by the hotel closing.

I also want to take this opportunity to ask the member not to make this a political situation. This is in fact a very serious issue.

I also want to bring to everyone's attention the fact that our government sponsored this centre that he refers to for more than the 12-month period that it was originally announced to be open for. I will look forward to a supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Minister, these workers don't want your sympathy. I beg to differ: This is a political situation. These people are losing their jobs and you're shutting down a centre that could help them. You're letting them down.

Let me tell you about Minh Huynh. He's a waiter who has worked at the Inn on the Park since 1973. On October 31, he's out of a job and doesn't know what he's going to do. He says, "Most of us are over 50 years old. The labour market isn't going to be very good for us." The Hospitality Workers Resource Centre was set up to help Mr Huynh and workers like him to get employment, training and social services, Minister, but you are choosing to shut down the centre and shutting out the hope for those workers in need.

I'm asking you, will you reconsider your cuts and keep this absolutely vital centre open? Will you do the right thing, Minister?

Hon Mrs Chambers: The right thing is to provide permanent services for these and workers in other industries who need employment services. We deliver those types of services to these and other workers in other industries through my ministry's Job Connect program. We are actually working with that centre, as we speak, to take them through the transition into services provided by Job Connect agencies across Toronto and, in fact, across Ontario. These individuals will not be abandoned.

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. As the Premier announced late last month, the province will provide up to \$30 million in assistance for cattle producers who continue to face border closures following the discovery of a single case of BSE in an Alberta cattle herd in May 2003. I understand that the Canada-Ontario set-aside

program is available as of today to Ontario cattle producers. Could you please give some detail as to how this program works?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The whole objective of the cattle set-aside program is to hold back. We have a serious oversupply of cattle in this country and in particular in this province right now. The goal of this program is to hold back a portion of those animals that would be sold and moving on and eventually going to slaughter. We've worked very closely with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to hold back those calves born in 2004 and ensure that those animals are held back until at least January 1, 2006.

This program is part of a \$30-million initiative that we'll be cost-sharing with the federal government. I heard some reference yesterday that it's a program for which there are no application forms, but you can call in and get a PIN. You can get the process started. To date, as of the announcement yesterday, over 40 farmers have already taken advantage of this. We're going to continue to be there to support them.

Mr Rinaldi: Minister, can you tell us how the program was designed and the total number of cattle targeted?

Hon Mr Peters: As I said earlier, the program was an initiative of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association endorsed this proposal. So this is a proposal that we've worked very closely with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to develop.

The target is to hold back 115,000 animals as a result of this program. I am confident that goal is going to be reached. As I said earlier, we already have farmers who are taking advantage of the new program. There will be detailed application forms available next week, as of November 1.

We're going to continue. The McGuinty government is committed to supporting the farmers of this province. The commitment of \$30 million is a definite, positive sign of support for farmers.

To every one of you and to those at home, again I stress, when you go to the grocery store, when you go to the restaurant, ask if it's from Ontario, ask if it's Canadian. That is one way we can help support this industry. Every one of us, in a non-partisan way, can make sure we send that message that we want to support Ontario product.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Of Dalton McGuinty's 231 campaign promises, numbers 100, 101 and 110 deal with improving government services to the taxpayer. In light of these promises by Dalton McGuinty, why are you creating a major inconvenience for students trying to get drivers' licences by no longer recognizing photo health cards of the province of Ontario as proof of personal identity?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): This government is not creating any inconvenience for any student getting a driver's licence. Our procedures are very standard and clear and they have been in practice for a long time.

We encourage people to get drivers' licences. I haven't heard there is any problem with that, but I will be more than pleased to see if there are any issues, and we will address those.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Minister. I am surprised to hear him describe it as not being a problem. On this side of the floor, we certainly have heard from students in our riding, from the driver's licensing centres about this major inconvenience.

I hate to correct the minister, but it has not been the policy for a long time. In fact, a memo dated February 13, 2004, from your ministry says, "Effective immediately, the Ontario health card will be removed from the ministry's list of acceptable identification documents." To make matters worse, according to the offices, they are no longer accepting the photo ID card from the Ministry of Health but they'll accept library cards, student cards or any kind of membership cards for effective ID.

This goes beyond a broken promise; this goes to the managerial competence of the McGuinty government. Please tell us that you'll immediately reverse this bizarre decision to say that you don't recognize the Ontario health card photo ID but you'll recognize library cards instead.

Hon Mr Takhar: A driver's licence is an important piece of identification and we want to make sure the people with the right credentials can get their drivers' licences. The memo was issued in February, six months back, and I haven't heard any inconvenience resulting from it. I'm saying to the member, if there's an issue, bring it to my attention and I will be more than pleased to clean it up.

1510

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, during the health estimates you said that in a matter of weeks you would be announcing 10 new satellite community health centres. Can you confirm today that the proposal submitted by the Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury to establish satellite clinics in Rayside-Balfour and Valley East will finally be funded?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am not in a position today to confirm what the member seeks. I can confirm, of course, that our budget has increased funding for community health centres, and that's for existing ones. Associated with that is going to be an expansion by 10 community health centre satellites. We are a week or two away from those announcements. I am not in a position to comment on the specific one she raises.

Ms Martel: In the fall of 1995, the former government promised \$1 million in capital funding to the centre de santé communautaire to establish satellite clinics in these two communities. Despite repeated requests and lobbying efforts, the money was never allocated. Both communities have been declared underserved for a number of years now; both communities have long waiting lists for those who need access to primary health care. Patients in both of these communities have waited, I think, long enough for satellite CHCs they were promised some nine years ago.

Minister, you said you were going to be funding 10 satellite community health centres. Will you commit today that this proposal, a proposal that's been in the works for nine long years, will be given top consideration?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The challenge we face, of course, is that 140 or so communities in Ontario are underserved from the standpoint of physicians. There are about 100 communities or so that have made application for either an expansion of their existing CHCs in the form of satellites or for new community health centres.

I cannot confirm for the honourable member that Sudbury will be on that list, but what I can tell the honourable member is that our commitment around family health teams will see the first 45 family health teams launched in fiscal year 2004-05, and that what we are seeking to do in the first class of applicants, if you will, is to reach out to those communities that have made application for community health centres, because we really want to, in a certain sense, reward the community effort that's gone into the development of those proposals. So I do think there is hopeful news out there for communities that have long been waiting for more access to primary care at the community level.

I recognize the issues she's raising with respect to those two communities in the Sudbury area, but I would just say that, regrettably in a certain sense, they are not unique in the province. There are many communities that wish to have an expansion of community health centres, and we are working very hard to drive more of these resources to the community level.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you well know, in my riding I have many constituents who are recent immigrants to Canada and whose first language is neither English nor French. On account of this, they face a double burden of not understanding Ontario's laws governing the workplace, nor do they understand the language. What has your ministry done to help these vulnerable workers?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member for London North Centre for the question and also for her efforts in trying to make government more accessible to people, particularly to those whose first language is neither English nor French.

Yesterday the Ontario government, the McGuinty government, launched a very exciting initiative. We wanted to make sure workplace laws were accessible to those whose first language is not English or French, particularly recent immigrants. So yesterday we launched an initiative that consists of the translation of basic workplace rights and responsibilities into 18 additional languages from English and French. They include Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Greek, Gujarati, Italian, Korean, Filipino, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese, and by the end of week, Hindi is coming.

The point is that in order to protect people, they have to know what their rights are and what their responsibilities are.

Ms Matthews: Has the government taken any other measures to improve the well-being of Ontario's most vulnerable workers and make it easier for business to comply with the laws?

Hon Mr Bentley: I'd like to again thank the member for her continuing efforts on behalf of, particularly recent immigrants, but all workers.

Earlier in this legislative year, this House passed a family medical leave act, very important legislation to provide job-protected leave for workers faced with the impossible task of choosing between their jobs and being with their loved ones in that very difficult time as they are approaching death.

We also raised the minimum wage for the first time in nine years, and that will continue to increase every February 1 until it reaches \$8 an hour by the year 2007.

For the most vulnerable workers, many of whom are recent immigrants, we have a piece of legislation pending in this House that we are waiting to get passed, and that's the bill ending the 60-hour workweek. We look forward to passing that legislation to protect the workers on behalf of whom the honourable member has been working so hard in London North Centre.

PETITIONS

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "Whereas today in the Legislature, Minister Duncan, Acting Premier, stated that the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, has always referred to the Ontario health premium as a tax, even in budget lock-up;

"Whereas on May 18, 2004, during the budget lock-up, the Minister of Finance was recorded on tape as actually saying, 'We had the option of looking at personal income tax increases or going with the Ontario health premium. Our choice on the health premium was very clear. We chose it because it gives us an opportunity to identify a revenue stream separate and apart from personal income tax that will be applied, every single cent of it, to health care';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that Minister Duncan correct the record."

I've signed this petition. I agree with it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition signed by over 700 people from my riding in northwestern Ontario. It states:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have affixed my signature to this petition as well.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

1520

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds" in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks," campgrounds, "municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I am pleased to sign and endorse this on my constituents' behalf.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners from Wallaceburg. I've affixed my signature to this.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a number of residents of central Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and

farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I'm signing it, and Justin will carry it for me.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition I'd like to present to the Legislature on behalf of the member from Whitby-Ajax.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children's aid society's recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

"Whereas the introduction of a volunteer into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council."

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a number of petitions that I've received from Dr Dario Laurenti, my friend in Espanola.

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

Thank you.

HIGHWAY 7

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government committed \$85 million to four-lane Highway 7 between Highway 417 and Carleton Place; and

"Whereas Lanark-Carleton MPP Norm Sterling announced this project when he was transportation minister because it will save lives and greatly improve traffic flow; and

"Whereas the current environment minister failed to deal with two environmental challenges in an expeditious fashion; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has warned that this delay means the project won't start for at least one year; and

"Whereas lives are being put unnecessarily at risk by any further delay of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

"...Premier Dalton McGuinty intervenes to ensure that the Ministry of Transportation is taking all actions necessary to start this Highway 7 four-laning project in the 2004 construction season."

I agree with that, obviously.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have more petitions sent to me by Melanie Perrier, the mother of Allyceea Ennis, who died very tragically on a school bus this past February in Thunder Bay. It's signed by 13,000 people.

"To the Legislature Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education requires district school boards to ensure that classes, 'on average for each board, do not exceed ... 24.5 in elementary overall'; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education states, 'For safety and discipline purposes, a school bus is regarded as an extension of the classroom'; and

"Whereas a full-size school bus has 24 seats and can carry up to 72 children, far more than a teacher is allowed to supervise unassisted; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation states, 'Police can charge drivers with careless driving if they do not pay full attention to the driving task'; and

"Whereas school bus drivers, no matter how diligent, cannot adequately supervise up to 72 children and safely navigate a multi-tonne bus through busy traffic and changing road conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation regulates deployment of safety equipment unique to school buses; and

"Whereas Transport Canada recommends that, 'depending on their physical characteristics, children up to the age of four or five be restrained on school buses using the same restraint system recommended for a passenger vehicle'; and....

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is responsible for establishing rules and regulations pertaining to driver qualifications and licensing; and

"Whereas the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators recommends that commercial vehicle drivers take a first aid course that includes respiratory emergencies, artificial respiration and accident scene management;...

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, remember Allyceea and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature pass a law:

"(1) requiring all elementary school buses to have a trained adult supervisor on board, in addition to the driver;

"(2) requiring the proper installation and use of appropriate child safety restraint systems on school buses for all children under 50 pounds or 23 kilograms; and

"(3) requiring all school bus drivers to annually pass mandatory instruction and testing in first aid, CPR and emergency situation management, as a requirement of Ministry of Transportation licensing."

I'm very pleased to add my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): To the Legislature of Ontario—and John Steadman is here to receive it from me:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1530

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These signatories ask the Ministry of Health to resume negotiations immediately with optometrists to continue quality eye care. I'll just quote in part from the petition:

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations;...

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that the optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I agree with this and I sign it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a large number of petitions in support of chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's my understanding that Mr Bisson has completed his debate. I would now ask for questions and comments.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, has now had over seven hours and five minutes of debate. I'm prepared to vote on it, and I hope the opposition feels the same way, so let's get on with the voting.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Well, I'm not ready to vote on it. I want to speak on this bill.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): If I can recall the comments made by my colleague during his debate of this particular bill, Mr Bisson once again was speaking about his experience and the kinds of constituents that he represents and the areas that he represents, specifically how we will be able to meet the training needs, the upgrading needs. Where is the strategy, really, in the bill to provide for the upgrades and the training that are necessary for smaller communities, for more remote communities, for communities that are perhaps not easily accessing these kinds of upgrades?

I think he did an excellent job in not only indicating some of the shortfalls that this particular bill has, but in recognizing that there certainly has been an improvement on the way the previous government treated teachers, specifically looking at opportunities that may have been missed by the government around the pieces in the bill or opportunities that the bill could have had in providing for quite a unique strategy, or at least in addressing in some way the lack of a strategy around smaller and more remote communities where people are less able to take time out to travel to major centres, that are less able to attract, perhaps, speakers and workshops and professional activity days for teachers who might need to have some professional activities and some upgrading in those smaller and remote communities.

Really, children across the province, regardless of whether they live in a major centre or a smaller, more rural and remote area, should all be able to access excellent education and should all be able to have

teachers who are well trained, who are articulate and who are up to date in terms of current practices and current teaching standards. I think Mr Bisson did an admirable job of representing those issues in his riding.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I share the same sentiments as my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest. This bill has had over seven hours' debate. In our opinion, it's time that we have a vote on it.

The Speaker: Mr Bisson, you've got two minutes.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I find it highly interesting—and I can't use the words because they'd be unparliamentary—that this government would now propose, after seven hours of debate, that we should somehow all sit down and not have anything to say about what is a fairly important matter for the people of Ontario, this from a party that, when in opposition, stood in opposition to the Tories when it came to time allocation. There are all kinds of speeches, and I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to pull them all, from the House leader to the now Premier to all of your cabinet and people who sat here before who basically were in opposition to the government when it came to time allocation and when it came to a closure motion, which I feel coming with those comments. I think that government on the other side has forgotten, quite frankly, what they used to say when they were in opposition.

Now, when it comes to what I had to say last night, the point I was making was that if we're going to talk about mandatory certification, as the Tories had tried to do and I opposed—and I support this government's move to get away from mandatory certification—we still have to deal with an issue that is very important, and that issue is, how do we deal with the many people out there who are currently employed or maybe have graduated from universities or colleges and are not employed and need to update their skills when they live in areas that are outside of the major urban centres?

For example, we know that where I come from, industry is really struggling and looking at how we're going to deal with upgrading skill sets with new technologies as we bring them into mining and forestry. Government does not have a policy to deal with that. I didn't put it, clearly, only at the feet of this government. I said this is an issue that's been out there for some time and we need to have a policy to deal with it.

How do we deal with upgrading one's skills if you have, let's say, an honours or a BA in something you happen to be employed in and you've been out of the education loop for 10 or 15 years? How do you do that if you live in Kapuskasing or White River? We need a policy to deal with those issues.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged to stand up and talk about this very important topic. As my colleagues mentioned before, we have spoken a lot about this issue. We've been debating it in the House for several hours. Hopefully, our colleagues from both sides of the House will come to terms and vote in support of it.

I'm going to use some of my time, and hopefully we can enter the debate and see that people who didn't participate can participate and then we can move on with the issue.

I was listening carefully to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay when he was talking last night about this issue. First of all, he supports the move of the government to cancel professional testing, which I think is very important. As mentioned by the member from Nickel Belt, many professions in our society are not subject to testing in order to maintain their certificates, like lawyers, doctors and other professions except teachers. I think it's just undermining the teachers, and that atmosphere created some kind of war, instability and a lack of tranquility in our education system when the past government imposed testing on teachers. They have to go through 14 courses and they have to pay for it. It creates some kind of uncertainty and chaos in the education system, in which we are telling teachers, "You're not qualified enough unless you go and take those courses." Besides that, this testing didn't prove in any way an improvement in the education system or improve the whole atmosphere in the education system.

This initiative by the Minister of Education, I think, creates some kind of relaxing atmosphere in the education system among teachers, which allows teachers to move on and feel respected again in their profession. They're being treated as people who look after our future generations.

I had the privilege to meet with the union of teachers last week and they had been talking about this initiative. They were happy and thrilled by the government initiative where they trust them again and give them the chance to go back to work with full respect.

1540

As you know, I have been a teacher before. All the teachers across the province and across the globe want to go to any training courses there are to take. They want to update their knowledge and their information. They go to work not because they treat it as a job; they treat it as a duty to help others. When I was a teacher, I used to take advantage of any training courses to update my knowledge and my own information to be able to offer my students whatever knowledge was available—especially when we live in an era full of technology that moves on a daily basis.

I believe this atmosphere created by the Minister of Education will also help a lot of teachers voluntarily go and take many courses to update their skills. And in the end, I believe those who will benefit from the whole atmosphere are the students across the province. In general, the whole relaxed atmosphere across the province will create a good education, a future for all the students in this province.

All of us take the measures to create bills. We create bills and take measures in order to enhance the education system in this province, and I believe 85% of the teachers engage in some kind of professional skills voluntarily and also about 7,500 elementary teachers began this

school year with specialized training in reading and math. We believe it's estimated that about 2.1 million students will benefit from this measure.

I think this approach to open the dialogue with education professionals is a very good approach and will help us in this province to maintain our advantage in terms of technological life, also help our kids to learn more and help our teachers who give their time and effort to be relaxed, to be happy, in order to give more and have a beautiful and wonderful province.

The Speaker: Question and comments?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting that the speaker talks so eloquently about the bill. However, it's the future of our children in our classrooms, and there's nothing more important in the province than to make sure that those children are given the opportunity to do well and to see that they do well. To empirically see the results is very important and therefore we believe, of course, that testing has to be an intricate part of the experience that they have.

Of course, the experiences that children themselves have in classrooms are some of the finest days of their lives. When you get to be our age in this House—or at least perhaps my age—you cast your mind back to those wonderful, wonderful days you spent in jail—in school that would be. I was just checking; nobody is listening.

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: That was just a test. It's a wonderful time of life for children. And to ensure that they maximize their experiences over that time—even though they are having a good time, having fun and developing all the interpersonal skills they will use for the rest of their lives—it's important they also have the experience of learning as much as they can possibly learn during those early years.

Of course, the learning curve in those early years is extremely high and, in fact, unmatched again any time in their lives, although it's approached again as they get to be 14, 15, 16 years old. But it's with the young ones that their interpersonal skills are developing, and that's the kind of thing that hopefully the educational process will give to the children of Ontario for many years to come.

Ms Horwath: I want to congratulate the member for the comments he made on Bill 82, the ban on teacher testing. It's obvious there are many points of point of view when it comes to this particular bill, and certainly the issues that were raised by the member from London-Fanshawe are ones that are, I think, in the best interests of everyone.

There are some things the bill does that are going to be readdressing some of the previous concerns that teachers had. I'll be speaking about that myself a little later on when I get an opportunity to make my own comments on the bill. But suffice it to say that the member's comments, I think, outlined specifically what the teachers were concerned about, as well as how those concerns that the teachers had perhaps affected children in the classroom. Of course the main interest of everyone, regardless of your personal opinion, in terms of how we

deal with maintaining extremely positive and good skills in the classroom, is really the interests of the children. I think we all might agree, regardless of the details on how we achieve that goal, that the end goal really is excellent, quality education in our public school system across the province.

I think the previous member who spoke on this issue outlined that. I agree that those are the concerns of all of us. I would also, however, say that there are some specific comments that I look forward to making around what the potential is for further improvement in that area. I can certainly enlighten some of the members of this Legislature around some comments I've had from teachers not only in Hamilton but across Ontario, as I've met with them recently at a status of women committee meeting that they held here in Toronto.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a privilege for me to comment on the comments of my good friend the member for London-Fanshawe, who certainly articulated extremely well the views of the government on Bill 82, the professional learning program for teachers. As I said before, my wife is a teacher, my sister-in-law is a teacher and my father-in-law is a retired elementary school principal in Peterborough. I remember when my wife came back to the classroom this past September. What a renaissance teachers were feeling, particularly in my riding, to come back into the classroom and know that this odious piece of legislation that was put in place by the previous government was soon to be repealed.

Unfortunately, teachers were targeted by the previous government to have this professional training program. No other professions in Ontario were subject to such draconian measures as was the teaching profession. When you see that over the last little while we've had seven and a half hours of debate on this particular bill, it's time that we get on with it and get it passed. We know the positions of the official opposition and the New Democrat Party and we know the government's position, so we'd be doing well in this place if we got this bill passed as quickly as possible and moved on to various other matters that I know members want to discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Time for one last question and comment.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm glad to see you in the chair. You do a phenomenal job for the people of your constituency.

I want to comment on the speech given by the member for Halton.

Mr Bisson: London-Fanshawe.

Mr Baird: London-Fanshawe, I'm sorry. I apologize. I want to compliment the member from London-Fanshawe for an excellent speech on education. I was just wondering if, when he was campaigning in the last election, he knocked on doors and said, "Hi, I'm representing Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party. I want to lower standards in education." I would suspect he didn't. I think it's important that we have standards in education.

We, all of us around this table, have to be re-certified every four years. All of us in this House have to submit to re-certification every four years, and sometimes we don't like the evaluations. We don't have the ability to say, "I don't agree with that evaluation. Therefore, it's not valid." I think it's important to look at other professions. I don't know why he didn't mention this in his remarks. Real estate agents in Ontario now have to seek re-certification. They have to constantly upgrade their skills because, collectively, we have decided that it is important that these types of professionals be current in their education. I would like to have heard the member speak to that issue.

Having said that, we look forward to more debate on this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes questions and comments. The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

Mr Ramal: Thanks to all the honourable members who spoke: the members from Hamilton East, Halton, Peterborough and Nepean-Carleton.

To the member from Nepean-Carleton, I want to say that we as a government—the Minister of Education and the government of Dalton McGuinty—are not going to lower standards, as perceived by some who are trying to send a wrong message to the people. No, we want to build respect and tranquility in the education system. We want to create peace.

It's very important that we talk about peace, because in the past there was war between the teachers and the government. The government was accusing the teachers of not doing their job; therefore, the teachers were upset. And who got affected by this atmosphere? The students. All that stuff created uncertainty in the education system.

Also, we're not saying that we're going to cancel all the training sessions. We're not going to cancel all the testing just for the sake of lowering standards. No, we want to develop another mechanism, in consultation with the teachers. I believe it is very important, when we impose some kind of peace legislation, that we go to the people in the profession and ask what they think about it. Let's work together to create a good mechanism to benefit all the people of this province—the teachers, the students and the parents—and then we can have a good education system.

I want to say to the people of Ontario, through this place, that we are not going to lower the standards. We are going to create peace and tranquility in the education system. We believe that by cancelling testing we will give teachers more respect and dignity. Let them do their work and respect them and honour them for doing a wonderful job for our province. By consulting with them and respecting them, we're going to create good education, not by penalizing them or threatening them: "If you don't this test and that test, we're going to take your certificate away from you." That's what we are planning to do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sterling: I'm disappointed by the fact that the government wants to shut down debate on this very

important bill, Bill 82, and I'm very disappointed that there's only a handful of government members here. Therefore, I move to adjourn the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1553 to 1623.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

Take your seats, please.

All those opposed to the motion will please stand and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

Please take your seats.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lanark-Carleton still has the floor.

Mr Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm glad there are more members of the government in here to listen to reasoned debate on this very important bill. We've only heard from government members to date that they want to close down debate on this important bill. That's what the two previous government speakers have talked about: "We've heard enough. We want to shut it down. We want to vote. We want to use our 71 members to put the 32 members to shame."

The other part of this important debate is that, really, what the government is doing here is lowering standards in our education system. I think it was 1996 when this bill was brought in as part of the set-up of the Ontario College of Teachers. I believe all parties supported the bill at that point in time. Part of that bill was to call teachers to accountability in a number of ways.

First of all, it was to set up the Ontario College of Teachers, which was given the right to discipline, to make certain the profession qualified for teaching, and put it out at arm's length. It's a very large college, a very important college. There are 190,000 teachers registered under the Ontario College of Teachers.

Right from the outset, we had a little bit of a problem with the college—not so much a problem with the college but a problem with the way the federations or the teachers' unions took a look at the college. Basically, the unions thought that they should control the college. They thought that the college was set up to advocate on behalf of the teaching profession. Of course, those of us who are familiar with the various professional colleges that we have in the province of Ontario know that colleges are not there for the profession; they are there for the people, the consumer, the student.

Over the past five to seven years we have seen the union continually want to gain control of the 31-member board of the Ontario College of Teachers. This government, prior to being government, in the election cam-

paign said to the unions, "We are going to give you control of the Ontario College of Teachers." They haven't done it quite yet, because there are two members who still need to be appointed to the board of this college. It continues on, though, the pressure by the union to actually control what happens to the consumer.

This morning I had a take-off from the college on the number of teachers—there are 190,000 of them, you remember—who either had had their certificate revoked or were suspended by the college. There's probably a list of 150 so-called revocations or suspensions.

This past week, when I was in my constituency of Lanark-Carleton, I talked to a young fellow who is in grade 10 in one of the secondary schools in Kanata. I was asking that young fellow how he was getting along in school and I was talking to him about the courses he was taking. He was a really engaging young man, who had a part-time job, and I was engaged in this conversation while he was serving me in that part-time job. He mentioned to me that he was taking a particular subject at his school and that he had a terrible teacher. This was a class A student, a very important student, and he was bemoaning the fact that he and his parents and the students of that particular class couldn't get rid of this teacher, who he and his fellow students felt was not competent to teach in that school.

I would make the argument that the problem with the college as it now stands is that it is not strong enough, that the discipline committee of the college should be controlled by non-federation members. The members of the discipline committee of the Ontario College of Teachers should have a majority of people on it who are not part of the union, because the union, at all costs, seems to want to protect a teacher, whether that teacher is competent or incompetent.

One of the greatest things that our government did—the Conservative government under Mike Harris—was to bring accountability into our education system. And even after the most recent election, I was listening to the radio as I was driving back to my constituency and I heard Dave Cooke, a former NDP Minister of Education, and Sean Conway, a former Liberal Education Minister in the 1980s, talk about the reforms that our government had brought forward. Everybody agreed that there were great reforms and that we had brought accountability into the system.

I believe that this drawback by the present Minister of Education, this drawback from the accountability of our education, particularly with regard to teachers and their keeping up their certification and the desire of the government and the public to continually make them accountable and to bring forward new ideas to their teaching careers, is really important.

As I talk, I see there are a number of conversations across. Obviously, the members of the government are not interested. Therefore, I move to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1702.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 51; the nays are 3.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ONTARIO HERITAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 24, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I turn to the government side for a speaker. Further debate on Bill 60?

I recognize the member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Mr Speaker, we were not given notice with regard to the calling of this order and therefore we were unable to prepare ourselves, so I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1704 to 1734.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 14; the nays are 35.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lanark-Carleton has the floor.

Mr Sterling: We're talking today on Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act. I hope members will bear with me in that we were given no notice by the government House leader that this act was going to be called. It seems to be a pattern developing here at the Legislature that the government House leader wants to surprise the opposition as to what we're going to debate next. It really is a strange strategy.

As you know, Mr Speaker, I did serve as the government House leader for three years, and during that period of time I always wanted to give as much notice as I possibly could to the opposition members so that we would have a reasoned, logical and intelligent debate about the legislation that we were going to talk about.

Now we have a government that is putting forward a number of bills, some of them not as important as others, but has gone into late-night sittings. So we're going to sit tonight from 6:45 until midnight. During that period of time, we'll go through the same procedures as we've gone through this afternoon, because this government doesn't want to seek co-operation from the opposition or anybody else in terms of what they're doing. It's a sign of early arrogance.

Let me talk a little bit about the Ontario Heritage Act. I'm really suspicious of what the government wants to do in this act. That suspicion arises from a former piece of legislation dealing with the closure and taking away of property rights in terms of the Adams mine. Whether you were for the Adams mine or against the Adams mine, this government basically said to the citizens of Ontario, "We are going to pull the rug from under your feet and we are not going to allow you access to the courts to seek proper compensation."

I guess the citizens of Ontario, and Canada, should understand that we are, I think, the only country in the western world that doesn't enshrine property rights in our Constitution. This government could not have done what they did on the Adams mine had property rights been enshrined in our Constitution. They would have had to allow that property owner the right to go to court and seek compensation for the property rights they took away from that particular owner. I guess what made it even worse was that they ignored the rule of law. The rule of law says that it doesn't matter what political stripe you are or where you are from, every one of our 12 million-plus citizens must be treated equally in the eyes—

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I respectfully request that the member for Lanark-Carleton address the topic of the bill.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would suggest that this rookie note that the man speaking, the member for Lanark-Carleton, is the dean of the Legislature, knows the rules quite well and doesn't need to be reminded by a—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Is this the same point of order?

Hon Mr Caplan: Yes, on the same point.

The Acting Speaker: OK. I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, I refer you to page 18 of the standing orders and standing order 23(b), which says:

"... a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she....

"(b) Directs his or her speech to matters other than:—

"(i) the question under discussion...."

The member clearly has not been speaking to Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, and should be called to order. It is a valid point of order raised by my colleague from Mississauga West.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your intervention. I was listening to the member's presentation, and I heard him distinctly say that he was going to start making reference to the bill, and I heard him doing so. I recognize the member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Sterling: I am absolutely amazed by the members opposite, particularly the minister of infrastructure, who doesn't understand that the Ontario Heritage Act is about property rights. I'm talking about the record of this government with regard to property rights, which is abysmal. They've made me so angry I'm going to adjourn the debate; I move so.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1741 to 1811.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

Members may take their seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 4; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1812.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Tuesday 26 October 2004

Mardi 26 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / *Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.*

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise and offer comment on Bill 25, which aims to restrict government advertisements, but I think we've heard debate in this Legislature—quite often sensible debate—about the Mack truck clause. Members are familiar with the Mack truck clause in Bill 25, and the Mack trucks are driving right through it as we speak. You may think that's the subway going beneath us; it's actually the Mack trucks driving through the Mack truck loophole in Bill 25.

The Mack truck loophole is the way the government, Premier McGuinty, can still get his mug on TV, if he so chooses, despite the fact that he purports to end any kind of what he would describe as partisan government advertising. He could still, for example, buy advertisements in Buffalo, New York. If he was on Fox TV out of Buffalo, New York, it's picked up throughout southern Ontario and probably has a significant audience through our cable system, satellite or direct-antenna TV. Dalton McGuinty could still be on television through the Mack truck loophole as part—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What's wrong with Buffalo?

Mr Hudak: The member asks, "What's wrong with Buffalo?" Actually, I like Buffalo a lot. I had the pleasure of growing up in a border town.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Shop there often, Tim?

Mr Hudak: I would, from time to time, shop across the border. We have a duty to speak before the House honestly, and I will confess that like many folks from Fort Erie, Ontario, from time to time you shop across the border. Part of that shopping—

Mr Kormos: Beer doesn't count.

Mr Hudak: The member says beer doesn't count. Part of that shopping by nature is the occasional beer and chicken wings—

Mr Kormos: The Anchor Bar.

Mr Hudak: Of course, the Anchor Bar.

Mr Kormos: Frank and Angela's.

Mr Hudak: So you could be sitting having some wings at Frank and Angela's place at the Anchor Bar in Buffalo, New York, and there on the TV, in full compliance with Bill 25, would be Dalton McGuinty's face on TV, touting his accomplishments because he could, potentially, if this bill passes, unless significantly amended in committee, put his mug on TV extolling the so-called—in his mind—virtues of the McGuinty government's decisions.

To answer the query from my friend from Peterborough, I do like Buffalo. In fact, I'm back to see the Buffalo Bills this weekend, my favourite NFL football team. I've had the pleasure of going to a few games this year. We saw them—

1850

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It's a painful year.

Mr Hudak: The member says it must be painful. It's not the kind of year that I remember in the days when I worked at the border at customs in the late 1980s, early 1990s, the four consecutive Super Bowl appearances.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, the member talks about Scottie Norwood and the infamous kick. I'm still very proud.

Mr Leal: He's from Oakville.

Mr Hudak: He's an Oakville boy, that's true.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Oh, Christie's from Oakville. Norwood was an American.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, it was Norwood who missed the big field goal against the New York Giants in that particular Super Bowl.

If Bill 25 were to pass, you could still see Dalton McGuinty's face on TV during the Super Bowl. If the Bills manage to turn their season around and are in the Super Bowl this year, in late January or early February 2005, conceivably Dalton McGuinty, who is, by the way, Mr Speaker—I don't know if you heard me say this before—really from a string of broken campaign promises—in fact, today we've calculated 37.

Mr Leal: Oh, no.

Mr Hudak: The member disagrees. He may know of more broken promises, because I think there are a lot of regional or local MPP promises. The candidate who took me on in Erie-Lincoln did say that he wanted to see the mid-peninsula corridor built immediately, by way of example, whereas now the government in office has slammed the brakes on the mid-peninsula corridor; in fact, I would say put it into reverse.

They may be redoing—I ask my colleague with greater verbosity than my own, is that the proper verb? They will be re-examining these studies, potentially doing the studies from scratch—the needs assessment, for example—meaning that it may be 10 years plus—who knows?—before the mid-peninsula corridor is built. In fact, I would argue that they're probably not committed to the mid-peninsula corridor at all and are simply hiding behind studies to delay making a decision and, at the end of the day, we won't see the highway proceed.

I know I have some colleagues across the floor—I know the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal is interested in building new roads and highways across the province, and I do encourage him in that. I think the minister has received very positive reviews about the documents he's brought forward, and I'll give him credit for that. I want to cheer him on. I want him to go to that cabinet meeting and take on those opposed to the mid-peninsula corridor and blow them away with your arguments in favour of the highway. If you want to have me as a guest in cabinet that day, I'll be glad to be there to support you in that cause.

Hon Mr Caplan: How about supporting Bill 25?

Mr Hudak: Talking about Bill 25, I would give greater credence to the government's sincerity in enforcing the provisions of Bill 25 if I knew they were keeping that promise to move forward with the mid-peninsula corridor immediately. Sadly, however, it has been over a year and no progress whatsoever, aside from a mention in the minister's report, which we're happy for, but in terms of any kind of commitments from his colleague the Minister of Transportation—none; in fact, the opposite, putting the mid-peninsula corridor into reverse.

Back to Buffalo and the member from Peterborough's question with respect to Buffalo, I do enjoy crossing the border from time to time. I think being born and raised in Fort Erie and being raised at a time before cable was widely available in our area—

Mr Leal: I bet you were a fan of Irv Weinstein.

Mr Hudak: Of course. Irv Weinstein was a legend and should be respected for what he did as an investigative reporter and then as the lead anchor on WKBW channel 7 news. Well-known. It's interesting the member from Peterborough says that. He's from Peterborough, and he's been living in Peterborough for some time now.

Mr Leal: All my life.

Mr Hudak: All of his life—well aware of Irv Weinstein, who was an icon of television journalism in Buffalo. This shows the reach of the American stations. If the member from Peterborough is just as familiar as some other members are here of Mr Weinstein, as I am, being

born and raised in Fort Erie, I think that illustrates the significant reach of Buffalo television stations.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Hear, hear. Good point.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, and I appreciate the assistance from my colleagues opposite in coming to that point, which may not have occurred to me naturally. So I appreciate the contributions with respect to Mr Weinstein. If they're well aware of WKBW News, if Dalton McGuinty chose to advertise on television in Buffalo, New York, it would obviously have a widespread impact throughout southern Ontario. And I know I have some colleagues here from northwestern Ontario who, similarly, would receive broadcasts from Minnesota on a regular basis—

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Detroit, actually.

Mr Hudak: The member is very helpful, thank you—and from Detroit, Michigan. Of course, those from Sault Ste Marie and such would receive Michigan broadcasts, and some of us receive Pennsylvania broadcasts as well. So there's an array of American television and radio stations at the government's disposal, if they chose to do advertising on them, radio or television, and it would be exempt from the provisions of Bill 25.

Mr Chudleigh: Absolutely.

Mr Hudak: Absolutely.

Secondly, we find ourselves now in a position where in our mailboxes across the province of Ontario, whether in Thunder Bay, whether in Lanark-Carleton, whether in Oakville, we got the red—coincidentally, red—report on the progress of the Dalton McGuinty government to date.

Now, I would wager, I would put forth the conjecture that if this document were done in an unbiased manner, an unbiased analysis of the McGuinty government, it would not be a glowing report. I know my colleagues will extol the accomplishments of the government to date; we would state the opposite, quite frankly. We would probably list the significant broken promises, to list among the top ones: the major broken promise not to increase taxes, now a punishing tax hike on working families of up to \$1,000 each; an increase in taxes on business, which will be a restraint on growth of the economy; failing to stop the 8,000 houses you talked about stopping on the Oak Ridges moraine—that usually comes up in the Dalton McGuinty's greatest broken promises hit list; hydro, I would say to my colleague from Halton, would be another example of a key broken promise. So I would suspect if there were an unbiased author of a document about the McGuinty government's first year, a significant portion of that document would list the 37 or more broken promises, highlighting higher taxes, higher hydro fees, and a climb-down on the commitment to the Oak Ridges moraine, to name a few.

Mr Gravelle: But you wouldn't be unbiased, Tim.

Mr Hudak: I say to the member I think I would be biased and it would be a biased report. And I would suggest that if the government were to write this from a partisan level or encourage the civil service to be only on the positive side, there's an inherent bias in that. And I

think people from the outside, not just our colleagues in the House, but the media, have rightly criticized that document as having a partisan nature.

Interestingly, that piece now is out, despite the fact that Bill 25 is before the Legislature. And I wonder, if Bill 25 had been passed at this point, how that document would fare against the restrictions of Bill 25. I think it would be interesting to put that to the test, and maybe we'll have the opportunity to do so. Certainly, if they had used other media like television or radio from the States or the Internet as a media, it would not be caught up in Bill 25 because of the Mack truck clause. But they chose to put a document out, coincidentally, as I said, in red colouring, I think indicating—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I don't think that's a coincidence.

Hon Mr Caplan: It's my favourite colour.

Mr Hudak: It may be your favourite colour, but I would think the connection with the now Liberal government and the fact that this document is red in colour shows its purpose was as a partisan document to try to help adjust to a government, quite frankly, reeling from a reputation of broken promises and, I would suggest as well, a lack of accomplishments.

Hon Mr Caplan: No.

Mr Hudak: I think so. I think if you asked the average taxpayer in Niagara, living in Beamsville or Dunnville or Fort Erie, to name one of the key accomplishments of the Dalton McGuinty government, they would be hard-pressed to do so.

Mr Leal: The gas tax.

Mr Hudak: No, I think if you came from Lincoln, by way of example, the argument—and I appreciate Peterborough bringing this up—if you came from Lincoln, if you lived in Beamsville, Vineland, Campden, Jordan, Vineland Station, Jordan Station—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: We'll get to that in a second. I'll be glad to talk about the greenbelt.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: See, I'm getting more questions here than I ever did when I was on the cabinet side. I'll do one question at a time.

To Peterborough first: He asked me about Lincoln, and are they raving in Campden, for example, about the gas tax. I don't think so. People in Campden pay gas tax the same as they do in Peterborough or other parts of the province, those who go to the Petro-Canada on Victoria Avenue in Vineland or to the Beaver Gas on Ontario Street in Beamsville. It's the same rate of taxation that folks in Peterborough, by way of example, would pay, or in Mississauga or Toronto.

I'll ask you, if you care to reply, how much of that gas tax do you suspect is coming back to the municipality of Lincoln? The member for Lanark-Carleton guesses zero, goose egg, nada. The member for Peterborough?

Mr Leal: I never speculate on these things.

Mr Hudak: You don't want to speculate? You should respect the dean of the House, if you don't speculate.

Respect the dean; he's right: Zero; not a single dollar of gas tax is going back to the community of Lincoln. So if I were to ask your average citizen working in a greenhouse in Vineland if they would list as one of the top problems of the McGuinty government that no gas tax is coming home to their community, they would not respond positively to that particular choice of policy.

Granted, Fort Erie does receive some funds for transit. But I would argue that if the folks from Fort Erie had to put this on a ballot, if they had to decide and they were going to choose a preference, if they were to receive money from the gas tax directly back to the municipality for their local option, whether it's transportation infrastructure or transit or other infrastructure, they would go for that straight per capita transfer. And if you look at the gas tax fully implemented across the province, that grand pool, and divide it up on a per capita basis, it works out to around \$25 per capita. So Fort Erie, by way of example, would be \$750,000. Three quarters of a million dollars in an annual grant would be welcome. They would then, at that point, say that this is an accomplishment of the McGuinty government. But the decision was made to concentrate on transit and not to invest in transportation infrastructure in general or allocate the funding on a per capita basis.

Mr Kormos: So what happened to small-town Ontario?

Mr Hudak: As a result, small-town Ontario, to answer the member for Niagara Centre's question, was left out in its entirety. In fact there are a number of people, and I think probably some members opposite would hear this as well as we are hearing it—there's a great deal of upset that the gas tax is not coming back to municipalities that are paying the gas tax.

There's no doubt whatsoever that the municipalities that are receive the funding for transit will welcome that money finally flowing. They'll welcome that money finally flowing after about a year or so of the McGuinty government. But there are approximately 340 municipalities that will receive no gas tax funding whatsoever. So effectively, this policy choice by the Dalton McGuinty government creates two classes of municipalities: the transit haves and the transit have-nots. We wonder what the government's proposal is going to be to address those 340 municipalities, perhaps like Greenstone, that are not receiving gas tax at all.

I think at that point, Speaker, to express the frustration and anger in rural Ontario about the absence of gas tax coming back to municipalities, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1903 to 1933.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you are counted.

You may take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you are counted.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 8; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Erie-Lincoln still has the floor.

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to be pleased to continue my debate. I know the CGAs, for example, are asking good questions about whether the most recent red booklet that was sent out by the government would be construed as partisan advertising. Maybe we'll put that challenge to the members across the floor, and I'd be glad to be proven wrong. If they would submit that piece to the Provincial Auditor and agree that if he finds it to be partisan advertising by its red nature or by its coverage, the funds will be paid, the costs will be reimbursed to the taxpayer and paid by the Ontario Liberal Party or whoever. I think that would be fair.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Maybe you did. I would ask the members opposite, has it been submitted to the auditor as of yet?

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: They're refusing to answer my question. And, as a supplementary, I'll ask them, are you considering submitting this to the auditor maybe next week? I fail to get a response from the members opposite.

If they really want to put their money where their mouths are, put the funds in the Ontario Liberal Party aside and say, "If the auditor, in his fair and unbiased judgment, sees this as partisan advertising, the Ontario Liberal Party will compensate the taxpayers dollar for dollar, penny for penny." If the auditor says, "No, it just happens coincidentally to be red," and sings the praises in its entirety of the Liberal government without offering any criticism, however even muted, if that's what the auditor says, fair game, and we'll look to the advertisements of Dalton McGuinty on American television or radio.

I had spoken a bit earlier about the various Mack truck clauses and the relationship of Mack trucks to gas taxes and how those will be spent in the province of Ontario. Because, as the Speaker will know, Mack trucks use a considerable amount of gas and pay a lot of taxes. Where those taxes will end up and in what municipalities I think is an interesting debate that I look forward to having in this Legislature.

One of the Mack truck loophole clauses is that government advertising attacking the opposition is fair game under Bill 25. Maybe this is an oversight and will be corrected in committee hearings. I hope so, because it would be consistent with what the government says this bill is about. But Bill 25, if I read it correctly, would allow partisan government attacks on either or both of the opposition parties. Certainly, if they sanctimoniously say they did not run a negative advertising campaign during

the campaign, they have certainly run a very negative government.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Talk about the Web site loophole.

Mr Hudak: Well, we talk about the Web site—if members are willing to give unanimous consent to continue speaking for an additional 20 minutes, I'd be glad to take that.

Interjection: Ask for it.

Mr Hudak: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to take another 20 minutes to speak to the Mack truck loophole clauses part of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln is asking for unanimous consent to continue speaking. I don't think it exists.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: One of the fundamental tenets of our standing orders is based on the British parliamentary system. I say to the member that he might want to get his standing orders out. When we're speaking to a bill, the mover of the motion, in this case the Chair of Management Board or the parliamentary assistant representing said individual, is to be present for the debate. That is a longstanding parliamentary convention, one that, as a former parliamentary assistant, I know. I was wondering if you might comment on that.

The Acting Speaker: I do not find that there is a point of order, but the member for Erie-Lincoln still has the floor.

Mr Hudak: Speaker. I'm pleased to continue debate on the bill.

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: Oh, they're shutting me down.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member please take his seat. Deputy House leader?

Hon Mr Caplan: I believe we're in questions and comments right now, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The time has almost expired. The member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr Hudak: I just regret the tactics of the members of the government side who are shutting me down, despite my request to continue debate—

1940

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Interjections.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Mr Speaker, I think I'm going to wait until the House quiets a little though, with your permission. Mr Speaker, should I wait until they stop or try anyway?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Beaches-East York has the floor for questions and comments. I would ask all members of the House to listen to his presentation.

Mr Prue: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It is always a pleasure to stand up, even if you can hardly hear yourself think or speak, to comment on the member from Erie-Lincoln. He's very erudite and quite loquacious.

Mr Baird: Quite loquacious?

Mr Prue: Yes, loquacious. Good word, eh?

It took a long time for him to get to the issue tonight, though. But in the last few minutes of his speech, he actually started to talk about the nub of everything we need to talk about here tonight, and that is the Liberal booklet that came out here a couple of days ago or last week. What a disgraceful little booklet that is. You should be ashamed.

Mr Baird: Their dirty little secrets.

Mr Prue: The dirty little secrets. It is partisan, it is nothing but an advertisement. It is glossy, it is in your colours, it is convoluted, it is obtuse and, to tell you the truth, I consider it quite bilious. It's funny, if you actually open up the pages and look at what's inside, all it is is things they feel good about; not necessarily things that are correct, not necessarily things that are historically accurate, but things they feel good about.

I have to ask you, did any of these events actually happen in this Legislature? The reality is they did not. There is nothing in there about the health premium or what they did in order to get that health premium before this Legislature. There is nothing in there about their failure on the insurance bill. There is nothing in there about the rising costs of hydroelectricity. In fact, there is nothing there that most Ontarians are concerned about.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I just want to reply briefly to what the member from Erie-Lincoln said. I was also at the CGA reception—in fact, I have been a CGA since 1967—and they were not asking me about any little red book; they were asking me about the fiscal integrity of the former government. They were saying to me, “How could they possibly have left you with a \$5-billion deficit? How could they possibly have left you with a structural deficit?” This was a room full of accountants who couldn't understand why the former Conservative government couldn't add it up.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It's amazing that when a member wants to prolong his speech—and he was giving a very good speech—the government members would shut him down.

Near the end of Mr Hudak's speech, he really came upon a very sore point with the Liberals. When the Liberals were in opposition, they talked about every kind of publication that the then Harris-Eves government would put out as being partisan advertising. So they brought forward Bill 25, which we're discussing tonight, as their defence.

And under section 5 of this act, it talks about a review by the Provincial Auditor of material they are sending out. When I received this particular booklet from the government in my MPP mail, I immediately phoned the auditor and I said to him—any one of us has the right in the Legislative Assembly to talk to the auditor—“Have you reviewed this book under Bill 25? Because I am sure the government wants to live within the meaning and spirit of this act, even though it hasn't been passed by the Legislative Assembly.” The Provincial Auditor said no, but he'd like to have a look at it.

Mr Speaker, is it proper for me to put a motion that the government send this book for examination by the Provincial Auditor? Is there any way I can do that at this time? I guess I could do it by unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, not on a question or comment.

Mr Sterling: But I could ask, by unanimous consent, if the Legislative Assembly would give me the right to put forward a motion without debate that the government of Ontario forward this booklet to—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton has sought unanimous consent. I think most of the members heard what he had to say. I don't believe there's unanimous consent.

One last question or comment.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make comments on the previous debate regarding this particular bill, but I first want to say that I find it extremely interesting that mention was made of the CGAs who were downstairs all evening long. I was there, certainly for a little while, to welcome those learned people in our province, but I also spent some time this evening in between the bells to watch the news, which I thought was something of great interest to the members of this chamber. I suspect the things that came out first on the news were not what were expected by the government side when they thought about what might happen on the news tonight. The issues were quite interesting.

Nonetheless, we are here to make comments about the previous speech. I have to say that when I first learned about this bill and spent some time reading it, I heard people talking about how it was being considered the Mack truck bill. I said, what the heck does that mean? What does the Mack truck bill mean? I don't understand the context there.

So of course, I had a little bit of time to read the bill and to understand where the concerns were coming from. It's really quite apparent that although it appears to be a bill that tries to put into place some parameters around the use of public funds for partisan advertising, what it really does is provide opportunities to do that in a way that people might suspect was non-partisan because the specifics are not stringent enough. I think the member from Erie-Lincoln made some comments about that in his remarks, and I think it's quite true.

The frustrating thing is that the people who watch these debates and who tune into this channel will hear the government defending these kinds of things. Unless they actually have a chance to look at the details, they don't really realize, unless members like the one from Erie-Lincoln raise it, that it's all a bunch of fluff and there's really not a lot of reality when it comes to getting things done in this particular chamber.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues to my left and from across the floor. I'm very curious about what the member for Hamilton East saw on

the 6 o'clock news tonight. While I'm a baseball fan and excited about the Boston Red Sox, I would wager that the biggest highlight reel tonight is going to be the greatest hits of the member from Etobicoke North. I look forward to that highlight reel on the news. The member is on quite the winning streak here in the assembly. We'll see how that transpires at 11 o'clock, as well as 6. The person, I think, who will be the most upset about this will be the Attorney General.

Here's the day when he finally brings forward this much-vaunted pit bull ban, makes sure he gets his hair just right, rehearses that speech in front of the mirror over and over and over again. Then, whose face is on the TV screen? Etobicoke North. So I feel for the Attorney General. I know he worked hard on all that, the press conference and the speech, but more debate on that later.

The member from Essex talks about what happened to the little red book. It's a good question. What happened to Dalton McGuinty's little red book? Perhaps it's buried beneath those 6,000 homes on the Oak Ridges moraine. Maybe that's where Dalton McGuinty's campaign books went, because you don't hear much about them anymore. Maybe they're in the hands of one of those 1,000 police officers who were supposed to be hired across the province. Maybe they have the last few copies of Dalton McGuinty's campaign promises. Or maybe they're resting on the desk of one of those insurance agents who are giving out those promised 20% reductions in insurance rates. I would wager none of those three things is a reality, nor is there any reality left in the credibility of this government with respect to its campaign promises.

I appreciate Lanark-Carleton's remarks. I look forward to the government members' responses, because I think we should send this to the Auditor General for his judgment according to Bill 25.

1950

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 25?

Ms Horwath: I'm pleased to bring my remarks regarding Bill 25, An Act respecting Government Advertising. As I've already alluded to, there are some serious concerns with this bill. But in terms of some contextual issues, the government certainly did say during the election campaign, prior to being elected, that they were going to bring some accountability to taxpayers around taxpayers' dollars being used for partisan advertising. That's what they said. They said, in fact, that they would save \$50 million annually through this measure. Of course, what they didn't say was that the annual would come eventually. We're in what, year one already?

Mr Baird: No, year two.

Ms Horwath: We're finished year one; we're into year two. We'll see how long it takes to get those annual savings. Nonetheless, we'll see whether or not the \$50 million is realized.

We know that this government has an interesting track record when it comes to figuring out what numbers really mean. In fact, Mr Crozier mentioned a little bit earlier, in regard to the CGAs who were downstairs, the fact that he's a CGA. I couldn't quite understand the point he was

making. Considering that if he is a CGA, he should have been telling the government exactly where the books stood when they were making all those campaign promises, which they now say they can't fulfill because they didn't know what the real numbers were. I find it quite interesting that they can argue both sides of that point in terms of whether or not they knew and whether or not they had the capacity to know what numbers really mean.

Nonetheless, there's been a long history of debate in this chamber regarding government advertising. Of course, during the previous government's term in office, there was often criticism about taxpayer-paid advertising of government initiatives. I can remember, in fact, before I was here obviously, watching some of that advertising and reading some of that advertising and then feeling a little bit uncomfortable, quite frankly, about how that was coming forward.

I think the problem is that the act we have in front of us doesn't really focus in on the important pieces that are necessary to ensure the accountability that they claim they will gain with this particular bill. Instead of some of the broader issues that could have been included in this bill, instead of being quite broad in regard to definitions, in regard to the way that advertising would be reviewed in terms of whether or not it was in fact partisan, that's not being done; in fact, the focus is extremely narrow.

We only need to look at a bill that was, I believe, tabled in this Legislature by Peter Kormos, a member of my own caucus, who brought a bill forward to deal with this very issue several years ago. In 2001, a private member's bill was tabled by Mr Kormos and, in that bill, a broader set of issues was articulated. In fact, that bill included a number of guidelines over and above the narrow ones that are defined in Bill 25. Mr Kormos talked about the value for money that was part of the particular piece of advertising, the cost of government advertising and whether or not that is justifiable, particularly looking at the measuring stick of value for money. He talked in that bill about whether or not government advertising should deal with matters for which the government of Ontario has direct responsibility or whether it should not include those pieces. He talked about whether government advertising should not be designed to promote or have the effect of promoting the interests of the party forming the government but, rather, just be strict information; so not party-related at all. Also, part of that bill dealt with whether or not government advertising was accurate and factual with comment and analysis clearly distinguished from the factual issues.

Therefore, is this all a matter of spin? I believe my colleague beside me here already mentioned that in his comments. Was it a matter of the red book, the report card that was published recently? Was that spin or was it all factual? I'm sure that anybody who's read it knows the answer to that. This particular Bill 25 will not address those kinds of issues. However, there is a bill that has been tabled in this very Legislature, a private member's bill that deals exactly with that issue: Is it matter of spin or is it a matter of facts and figures?

Mr Baird: Whose bill is that?

Ms Horwath: Of course, that would be Peter Kormos's bill, which was tabled in this Legislature in 2001.

Nonetheless, the current advertising bill that we have in front of us is, I think, a step in the right direction, but the problem is, like so much other of the legislation that this government has been deciding to put forward, it only does a partial piece of the job. It only moves us a small measure. In fact, as a New Democrat, I'm not surprised by that. Oftentimes it has been said, and is said on every level, provincial and federal alike, that when Liberals run, they talk like New Democrats, but when they get into office they govern like Conservatives. I've got to tell you that these kinds of half measures, these kinds of bills, that only move you a little bit down the yardstick can be spun in a way that people somehow get a sense that, "Oh, gee, they're doing the right thing. They are going in the right direction." But people only need to look at the fine print or, in this particular case, the lack of fine print when it comes to the pieces of this bill that are missing, the pieces that would really constrain the partisan use of public taxpayer dollars on advertising.

Nonetheless, because of the extreme disappointment I have with this particular legislation and that I find it is rather difficult for me to continue to discuss because it is disappointing in so many ways, I would then move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: I say to the member for Hamilton East that her motion is out of order because we've already moved an adjournment of that nature, an adjournment of the House.

Ms Horwath: Mr Speaker, my understanding is that the other—

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Speaker—

Ms Horwath: If I could finish with my point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding is that it is within my scope to be able to move adjournment of the House. We have not moved adjournment of the House as yet in this debate and my understanding is that that's in order. I'm sorry to challenge the Speaker.

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders are very clear. The ruling of a Chair is not debatable or challengeable by any member of this assembly.

Speaker, you have made your ruling. I look forward to further debate from the member for Hamilton East.

The Acting Speaker: Again, I inform the member for Hamilton East that she does not have a valid point of order.

Ms Horwath: I apologize, Mr Speaker, and will then take my opportunity to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: That motion is in order.

The member for Hamilton East, Ms Horwath, has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1958 to 2028.

The Acting Speaker: Will all those who are in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

Any members opposed to the motion will please rise to be counted.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 36; the nays are 1.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 23, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 86, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, the Legislative Assembly Act and the Representation Act, 1996 to provide for provincial general elections at intervals of approximately four years, to govern the timing of writs, close of nominations and polling day, to make modifications relating to the electoral readjustment process, and to make technical amendments / Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections, la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale en vue de prévoir la tenue des élections générales provinciales à intervalles d'environ quatre ans, de régir le calendrier relatif à l'émission des décrets, à la clôture du dépôt des déclarations de candidature et au jour du scrutin, et d'apporter des modifications au processus de révision électorale ainsi que des modifications de forme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When this House last debated Bill 86, one of the New Democrat members held the floor. I now turn to the government side for a speaker. Further debate?

I recognize the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I am most interested in this idea of fixed election dates here in Ontario, particularly with the bill that has been tabled by the government.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Have you read it?

Mr Baird: I read the bill. I guess it really just amounts to a promise to call an election, because under this bill, the Premier, on October 7, October 5, October 4—whatever, early October. It's not legal. It does not bind the Lieutenant Governor to call an election. The Lieutenant Governor can call an election whenever he or she pleases. This bill doesn't change that. If this bill was passed and proclaimed tonight, the Premier could still go and call an election tomorrow.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: It does. Have you read the bill? That's what it says. It does not bind the Premier from asking the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Broken promise again.

Mr Baird: It's a broken promise again, the member for Simcoe-Grey says. If you think we're going to give quick passage to a bill—it's not that you could put a Mack truck through it; it's that you could put a Mack truck factory through this bill.

I was astounded that the Attorney General didn't consult the Jewish community on this bill. That is outrageous. The member opposite, the Attorney General, has a significant Jewish community in his own constituency. I will tell you that in Nepean we have a significant Jewish community, and this proposed—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): What did they say to this bill?

Mr Baird: What did they say? They weren't consulted.

If the Attorney General had gotten off this fascination with pit bulls and actually consulted the Jewish community, maybe the results of that consultation would be reflected in this piece of legislation.

So one of the things we're going to want to see happen is for this bill to go to committee. Those of us on this side of the House want to hear from the Jewish community. They should be consulted about the date of this election and whether it might keep the participation—either as candidates or as voters, electoral participants—in mind. We think that is a good idea.

Mr Wilson: It's disrespectful.

Mr Baird: "It's disrespectful," the member for Simcoe-Grey says.

I will tell you that we will do the work that you failed to do on this bill. We will consult with the Jewish community. We will not just consult with the Jewish community here in the city of Toronto. We'll consult with the Jewish community in York region, in Nepean, in the city of Ottawa and in the great riding of Ottawa West-Nepean, which, in my area, has a substantial Jewish community.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): David Young would not have done this.

Mr Baird: David Young would not have done this. You're correct. David Young, as a member of cabinet, would have stood up and said, "Stop the presses. Stop the debate about the pit bulls, and let's talk about democracy in Ontario."

My support for the Jewish community in Ottawa is very well known. On a variety of bills, I was a very enthusiastic supporter of the member for Halton's private member's bill. I've been a very strong supporter of the Tamir Foundation, which is a developmental disability organization which helps not just the Jewish community but the entire community, a strong supporter of the new Hillel Lodge; we were able to work with the Jewish community. Actually, my parents live on the location of the old Hillel Lodge on Wurtemberg Street in Ottawa.

Hon Mr Caplan: Did you kick them out?

Mr Baird: No. It was an old lodge. The community came together and said, "We could do better for our

seniors," and they built a new one. It's right on the Jewish community campus. The Tamir Foundation is there. The folks at Tamir can use the Jewish community centre, the fitness facilities and the pool there. The students from the Hillel Academy volunteer at the Tamir Foundation, helping people with developmental disabilities. The folks who live at the Tamir Foundation, at the group home on that campus, can use the synagogue at the long-term-care facility at the Hillel Lodge.

So it's a great example of community coming together, whether it's to help students, seniors or people with developmental disabilities, and actually mutually supporting one another.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: If the member opposite doesn't want me to talk about the Jewish community, I know he'll get up and intervene and put a stop to it.

With the Tamir Foundation, it's a great example of how the community really puts its wing over this group of vulnerable people.

I spoke to one leader in the Jewish community, and he said that when he's working out at the Jewish community centre and sees the people with developmental disabilities partaking in everyday life—the pride that it brings him and other members.

Anyway, we will want to consult the Jewish community and others on this bill.

One question I want to ask is, does this bill—and this is one of the questions I'd like to ask in committee hearings—say the date when the Premier calls the election? We know the date that it's called for. When he would promise it would be called for is included in the legislation. But he can call it 28 days before. When I first ran for Parliament, it was called 40 days before. We had a 40-day election campaign, then we had a 29-day campaign the second time and then a 28-day campaign the third time. Is the Premier going to maintain the divine right of when to call it and not just when it's going to be? That could allow all the Liberals to put out all their partisan advertising before the writ is dropped. They could say, "Guys, get all your partisan advertising out the door in 35 days, because 34 days before the election, we're going to drop the writ."

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): They wouldn't do that, would they?

Mr Baird: I think they would do it. That's one of the questions I'd like to ask the mover of this bill. But the Attorney General isn't here for me to ask him.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton knows full well that he can't make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr Baird: I'd like to ask the mover of this bill a question. Michael Bryant, the member for St Paul's, the Attorney General and minister responsible for democratic renewal—I'd like to ask him this question, so that in questions and comments he could stand up and answer it.

Mr Jackson: What about his PA?

Mr Baird: Who is his PA? Could you find out for me? Could you find out at the table? Is the parliamentary assistant for the Attorney General here?

There was a day in this House when a government House leader wouldn't dare call a bill if the minister—Norm Sterling, the member for Lanark-Carleton, wouldn't dare call a piece of legislation unless the minister or the parliamentary assistant was here. That's what these guys get, 12 grand, 15 grand, 10 grand—that's what they get: \$10,000 to be here when their bill is debated.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Some of them get a limousine.

Mr Baird: Some of them get a limousine, apparently. One of them had a limousine, we know.

Interjection: For a short while.

Mr Baird: For a short while. He was relieved of his responsibilities as a parliamentary assistant after driving it to London. Apparently, there was a parliamentary assistant who showed up at an event with his minister. He arrived in a big stretch limo, and the Premier found out about it and fired him.

2040

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): That must have been under your government.

Mr Baird: No, it was under yours. I think we heard it from this gentleman, the same member who made the news, made the headlines today. He was the best-known Liberal in the province. He was the one who trumped Michael Bryant on the news tonight.

Boy, oh, boy. Michael Bryant will be angry, because Michael Bryant is a University of Toronto law professor. I think he went to Harvard. I thought, when Michael Bryant brought a piece of legislation—he brought in the pit bull legislation today. I thought Michael Bryant was going to be an Attorney General we'd put in the category with Roy McMurtry, Ian Scott and Norm Sterling, but instead the big priority of the Attorney General is to ban pit bulls. So he's going to go under the headline "Marion Boyd and Howard Hampton."

Howard Hampton said he slept through the entire five years and wasn't responsible. I like Howard. I'm not going to complain about Howard.

But I thought Michael Bryant, the author of this bill, was going to be someone of the stature of Norm Sterling, Roy McMurtry—

Mr Delaney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I respectfully request that the member for Nepean-Carleton refer to the Attorney General by either his title or his riding and not by name.

The Acting Speaker: I would appreciate it if he did that as well.

Mr Baird: The minister responsible for banning pit bulls—but here's a guy who's a University of Toronto law professor, from the U of T, one of the most highly regarded academic institutions in the world, and his big priority on becoming Attorney General is to ban a certain breed of dog. That is the biggest media hit.

Mr Wilson: It's a slippery slope.

Mr Baird: It's a slippery slope.

Mr Wilson: Pit bulls today, Dobermans tomorrow.

Mr Baird: Pit bulls today, Dobermans tomorrow, potentially Rottweilers, potentially the Minister of Health, who has been labelled a pit bull. The Attorney General, the minister responsible for pit bull banning, is running for the leadership of the Liberal Party to replace Dalton. The Minister of Health is going to be a leading candidate for that job, and this bid to ban pit bulls is a pre-emptive strike.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order. First of all, the member from Mississauga West.

Mr Delaney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), I request the member for Nepean-Carleton to address the bill under discussion.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Nepean-Carleton to make reference to the bill that's being debated, which is Bill 86.

Mr Baird: In the last election, we had elected the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, who's 218?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes, 218.

Mr Baird: I am 218 as well. I am in training, and I will figure out who can—

Hon Mr Smitherman: What are you training for?

Mr Baird: To lose weight, to be fit. I'm taking up the Smitherman challenge and the Bradley challenge to be—

Hon Mr Smitherman: Would you like to go and race down University Avenue?

Mr Baird: No, I don't want to step outside and race down—I can't jog. I'm not good at that.

Anyway, getting back to the bill, the minister responsible for banning pit bulls. He also has this bill on election reform. I was surprised—he has been Attorney General for a year and hasn't passed a single piece of legislation. I mean, even Marion Boyd could pass legislation. Even Howard Hampton could pass legislation. I'll bet you Alan Pope passed a piece of legislation in the two minutes he was Attorney General.

Mr Wilson: You're pushing it.

Mr Baird: OK, maybe I'm pushing it. Which category would Alan Pope be in? Would he be in the Marion Boyd or the Norm Sterling? I would not compare him—he wasn't half the Attorney General Norm Sterling was.

Anyway, so we have this bill, which is nothing more than a Dalton McGuinty promise act. Well, no one in the province believes Dalton McGuinty will keep his promise. I challenge any member—we'll go down to University Avenue here or to Yonge Street or Bay Street, or we'll go to Nepean, to Robertson Road or Brophy Road or West Hunt Club Road or Bayshore Shopping Centre, and we'll stop 100 people and ask them, "Do you think Dalton McGuinty keeps his promises?" I guarantee you that 99 of those 100 people will say, "No bloody way."

So this bill is just an act where Dalton McGuinty promises to have an election on a certain day. I don't even think he says which day he's going to call it. Do you know that, former Attorney General Sterling?

Mr Sterling: October 4.

Mr Baird: No, it's going to happen on October 4. Do you know what day he is going to drop the writ?

Mr Sterling: No, I don't.

Mr Baird: No, because that way they can get out their partisan advertising. They can get all the Liberals to get all their partisan taxpayer advertising out the door and then call the election five minutes later, because they won't pass—they promised to ban partisan advertising, and they're delaying their own bill. We were here debating it. The member for Erie-Lincoln was giving a wonderful speech on that bill. The member for Hamilton East also spoke to it. They shut down the member for Erie-Lincoln. He wanted to debate the bill, represent the good people of Crystal Beach, Fort Erie—

Mr Hudak: Wellandport.

Mr Baird: —and the great community of Wellandport. They shut him down. The Darth Vader of democracy over there shut him down. Speaker, you'll pardon us for being skeptical of this bill.

Mr Hardeman: We should be.

Mr Baird: "We should be," the member for Oxford says. They should be telling us what day they are going to call the election. I wish I could ask questions of the author of this bill or I wish, in the two-minute-hits part, they would. I'll tell you, when Norm Sterling was House leader, they never would have allowed a bill to be debated—I remember as a parliamentary assistant that I slipped out of this place for five minutes once and members of the opposition and the third party were up on points of order saying it was virtually unconscionable to debate a bill without the author or the parliamentary assistant available to answer questions, unheard of. That's what you're paid for. That's why you get the extra bucks, so you've got a responsibility.

Mr Jackson: So much for democratic renewal.

Mr Baird: So much for democratic renewal.

Interjection: Why have a debate?

Mr Baird: Why have a debate? They don't show up, and that is very unfortunate. This is important, because the date of when the next election will be—

Mr Wilson: The biggest change in our parliamentary democracy ever.

Mr Baird: The biggest change in our parliamentary democracy ever. The next election can't come soon enough for the single mother with two kids in my community who has a 24% Ontario tax hike. But the millionaire who goes to fundraisers for the Minister of Finance and for the Premier, do you know what tax increase he gets?

Mr Hudak: Is it 24%?

Mr Baird: It's not 24%, not 23%, not 22%, not 19%, not 18%, not 10%, not 9%, not 8%; it's a 1% tax increase for the millionaire. Now, where's the social justice in that? They said when they brought it in, "We thought about taxes but it's not a tax, it's a premium." These guys can't even raise taxes competently over there. Maybe they should have talked to Gerry Phillips. He could have done it competently, because Gerry knows how to raise

taxes. He was part of the Peterson Liberal government. There was a gang who knew how to raise taxes.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): They did it all the time.

Mr Baird: They did it all the time, and they became quite proficient at it—33 tax increases.

We also want the fixed election date because we need the Ottawa Hospital to get proper funding. The member for Lanark-Carleton and I are the only members from Ottawa who are prepared to stand up and fight for the Ottawa Hospital to get funding.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): You didn't for years.

Mr Baird: Talk to anyone at the Ottawa Hospital. The last time I was there we gave them the biggest hospital budget increase in the history of public hospitals in Canada. It was added to the base budget, and it was announced by John Baird and Norm Sterling for that hospital. It was the biggest base budget increase ever for any hospital, and we couldn't even get a member from Ottawa to stand up in his place and speak to the bill and defend the Ottawa Hospital.

Mr McNeely: You closed beds.

Mr Baird: You bet your boots. We appointed a supervisor. We took responsibility and cleaned up the mess, and now there is no one—

Hon Mr Smitherman: You cleaned up your own mess.

Mr Baird: No, we cleaned up the mess of the previous board. We took responsibility for something.

I am disappointed that we can't get our questions answered by the mover of this bill, and as such I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Baird has moved the adjournment of the House? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2050 to 2120.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise now and be counted.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 8; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to pass Bill 105 for third reading without debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to pass Bill 105 immediately at third reading.

It's my understanding that a government minister has to move the motion. He can seek unanimous consent to vote upon it.

Hon David Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move Bill 105 for third reading without debate.

TAX TERMINOLOGY
HARMONIZATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'HARMONISATION
DE LA TERMINOLOGIE FISCALE

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to revise terminology used in the French version of certain statutes / Projet de loi 105, Loi révisant la terminologie utilisée dans la version française de certaines lois.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Be it resolved that the bill will now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004
(continued)

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS
(suite)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): The member for Nepean-Carleton still has the floor.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): To think you people said I was not being constructive. I am shocked and appalled. As I told you, I am always here to help in any way that I can. But I still want to have the Attorney General here for my questions and comments, so I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2123 to 2153.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise now and be counted.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 35; the nays are 3.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

LIQUOR LICENCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When this House last met to discuss Bill 96, one of the Conservative members had the floor. He's not here now. I'll turn in the rotation to the New Democrats.

Further debate?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Mr Speaker, I just want to see how much time I have before I start. Could I be advised as to how much time I have? Is it 10 minutes, 20 minutes, an hour?

The Acting Speaker: You have 20 minutes for your presentation.

Mr Prue: This is a debate that I thought at one point I was going to welcome a great deal when I first heard about taking your own wine. I've done that in Montreal, and I've read about it having happened in many other places across the country.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thirty years.

Mr Prue: No; 30 years.

To some extent, I would think that it's probably a good bill. I'm not going to tell you that I don't think it is, at the outset, but—there's always a "but."

Taking your own wine to a restaurant is no different, I would put it to the majority of people, than going to the restaurant and buying that selfsame bottle of wine from the restaurateur. When you go into a liquor store, you can buy any number of wines in Ontario. In fact, as you all know, Ontario is the world's leading importer of wines from across the world. The LCBO has tremendous, tremendous advantage in what they do. You can buy literally thousands, maybe 5,000, 10,000—I don't know the exact number—various brands of wine in Ontario, ranging from some terrible plonk that you wouldn't want to put into your mouth, quite frankly—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Name it.

Mr Prue: No, I'm not going to name it. I've had some pretty bad stuff over my life—to some exquisite bottles of wine, some of which are made here in Ontario but most of which come from France, quite frankly, and some very good ones from Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina.

People determine what kind of wine they want themselves. Almost to a person, people buy their wine from the LCBO. In the majority of restaurants, if the restaurant is a good restaurant, they can get those selfsame bottles of wine that they enjoy at home or that they can buy from the LCBO in the restaurant.

The question is one of markup. How much does the restaurant charge to mark up that same bottle of wine that you buy for \$10 or \$12 at the LCBO? How much do they

charge when it, in turn, goes into the restaurant, and why do they charge that markup?

Many people are surprised to see their \$12 bottle of wine, which is grown in a field somewhere in south-western Ontario and which they come to enjoy, cost \$25 or \$30 or even more in a restaurant, and they wonder why that happens. I think that a great many people who saw this bill when it was being proposed thought, "Well, I can take that \$12 bottle of wine I buy at the LCBO into the restaurant, and I can save myself \$10 or \$12," or \$15 or \$20, or whatever the markup is. I think that those people who are looking at this bill as a panacea are going to be very sadly mistaken, because they are going to find out that when they go into the restaurant, the restaurateurs—if they agree to this particular bill—are going to mark up the wine the same or more than they already do. I would think that this is the problem we have with this bill. If the bill is going to be honest with the consumers, if the bill is going to tell them what is really going to happen, it is going to talk about the ability of the restaurateurs to effect a markup, a markup which the consumer may or may not wish to pay.

Consumers, of course, would have a much broader choice. Even the best of restaurants, even the very best in this city or anywhere across Ontario—

2200

Mr Hudak: Name one.

Mr Prue: Bigliardi's, where you go all the time.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I just did.

Interjection: Say it again. George needs the business.

Mr Prue: George needs the business. All the Tories know that place.

I will tell you that even the best restaurants in Ontario have, at most, limited wine cellars. If a restaurant has a wine cellar of more than 100 bottles, they generally have a pretty good wine cellar, whereas the consumer, on the other hand, has the entire LCBO repertoire, which may run into 5,000 or 6,000 or 8,000—whatever the number is. It's enormous; it's huge. Therefore, giving the consumer that option is a good thing.

But since this bill was first introduced, we have heard from restaurateur after restaurateur that they have no intention of dropping the markup. In fact, many have suggested that they are going to have to increase the markup on wine or they are going to charge what is called a corkage fee that may be in excess of what they are charging today.

What that means for the consumer is that to enjoy that same bottle of wine which they go to the LCBO to buy, they then carry home, they then wrap and carry in the trunk of their car—because they're not supposed to carry it in the body of the car—and they take it from the trunk to the restaurant and put it on the table and some guy pops the cork, they are going to find that this will end up costing them a lot more money than they had counted on. That's what I think we have to be honest about in this bill. The restaurateurs are not going to just simply reduce the cost of the wine because you carry it there; in fact, in

all likelihood, your carriage of that wine will end up costing you more money.

In your local little pizzeria, you may be able to enjoy a bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild. You may be able to drink some fine old boire from 1895 or whatever else you can buy at the liquor store or Vintages. But the reality is that although your selection will increase, your costs will increase with it. This is the first problem that we have with the bill: The consumer has choice, but the consumer ends up paying.

We have a problem with this bill, as well, because of what the people from MADD have to say. They claim that they have not been consulted, and I have to take them at their word. They do not believe that they have been adequately consulted on this bill. I am not one who believes that someone who takes a bottle of wine from their home to the restaurant is any more likely to get drunk than someone who buys that bottle of wine at the restaurant. I don't know where the argument comes from. But I do know that the people from MADD have a lot to say, and what they have to say is important. We have had people in this province die, we have people in this province who have been seriously maimed, we have traffic accidents caused by people who are inebriated—and they need to have those fears assuaged. They need to have this government explain in some significant detail how the carriage of wine to a restaurant is not going to increase drunkenness or people driving under the influence. I think that needs to be done, and it probably needs to be done in committee.

For a third one, we have the problem, as exists in Quebec and in other jurisdictions, of restaurateurs not buying into the program. Therefore, they say that they are going to go through all of the work, they are going to go down to the local liquor stores, they are going to buy the wine or import their own wine or do whatever they need to do to fill those racks in the cellar of the restaurant—they are going to do that, and that's part of what they do—and that they do not want to run a restaurant which has a bring-your-own policy. The restaurateurs are nervous about this. They have not been consulted.

If we give them free rein to charge whatever they want, I guess one would say, "What's the difference? If the restaurateur can double or triple the price of wine, if you're going to carry it in, what's the difference whether they supply it or not?" That may be a fairly good question. I have to ask that question myself. But I am not hearing those kinds of answers coming from the government bench. I am only hearing the questions offered by restaurateurs—that they are not interested in this particular program. Because, as the members opposite will know, restaurateurs, by and large, do not make their money from the sales of food in Ontario. Although there are some restaurants that are able to exist on the simple sales of food, without a liquor licence, the majority of restaurants in this province make their money from the sales of alcohol, which accompanies the meals.

I have my own colleague here beside me, whose husband is a famous restaurateur in Hamilton. The name of the place is?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's 146 On The Terrace.

Mr Prue: It's 146 On The Terrace. I invite anyone in Hamilton to come out to that particular restaurant. She has confirmed to me that is exactly the case in that restaurant, as it is in so many others: the restaurateur does not make his money on the sales of the food as much as on the sales of the alcohol. They are very nervous about losing these sales. They are very nervous about the mark-up that the province may allow.

We have this government that is talking about priorities. We have this government that is talking about things that need to be done. I would agree that there are a great many things in this province that need to be done. I would agree with the government members sometimes that they are having a hard time with the deficit that may have been left to them, they are having a hard time finding the necessary monies to run the education programs, they are having a hard time running the programs in health and the myriad of other major items that are there. And then we have this one here. We have this one that has come upon us with virtually no public debate, with no buy-in from the restaurant interests, with no buy-in from the people from MADD Canada or from those who monitor drinking and driving. There's no buy-in from the police that I can see—and they have many, many questions to ask. There is certainly no buy-in for the consumers, when, in the end, the consumers, for the privilege of doing all of the work, are going to have to carry the wine themselves and see very large markups in those restaurants that will allow them to do so.

I don't know whether this is a bill whose time has come. I don't think it has, because I don't think we are prepared for it in this province. There are people out there who are saying, "Oh, terrific, terrific. I want to do it."

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): That's very paternalistic.

Mr Prue: It's not paternalistic.

Hon Mr Caplan: It is.

Mr Prue: Oh, it's paternalistic because I want to talk to somebody. It's not paternalistic to you, because you want to force it upon them. You want to force it upon them without even asking a single question of the police or of—

Interjection: Great social engineering.

Mr Prue: Yes, it's great social engineering. You're very good at that. It's too bad you're not much good at anything else.

Hon Mr Caplan: What's wrong with giving them the choice?

Mr Prue: The choice is a fine choice, provided that the people know there is a cost involved in that choice and that it may be much more than what they are paying now.

Since the members opposite are not too interested in listening to what I have to say, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2208 to 2238.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you are counted.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 8; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. The member for Beaches-East York still has the floor.

Mr Prue: In the seven minutes left to me, I have a couple other critiques of this bill that I think are important to be heard. The first one is that the bill does not distinguish between wines brought to the restaurant from around the world versus wines made in Ontario and/or Canada. If the government was intent upon helping the Ontario wineries then, quite simply, the bill could be tailored in such a way that those wines that could be brought must come from Ontario. That is not contained in the bill. What you are doing is inviting people to bring wine literally from anywhere. If you want to help the Ontario wineries, then I think you should come out and say that. But if you leave it wide open, you will find that the majority of the wines taken to restaurants will not come from Ontario, but in fact will come from literally anywhere in the world.

Ontario produces some of the finest wines, bar none, in the world. I have to tell you, I would not have said that 10 or 20 years ago, but now we are starting to see some world-class wines. The VQAs are starting to make their own. You will find that Ontario wines are now starting to compete and to show in places around the world, particularly in Europe, in France, Spain and Italy, and are starting to win awards. This is particularly true of the whites, of course, but even the reds are starting to win some international acclaim.

If this government is intent upon making a stronger niche for Ontario wines, then the bill should perhaps be tailored in that way to allow the wineries to make deputations at committee that would allow preferential treatment for their wines to be taken as bring-your-own bottles.

Mr Patten: It's against free trade.

Mr Prue: It may be against free trade, but I haven't heard people argue against free trade, and I certainly don't know whether the Americans will stand up opposed to this or not. I don't know if they're going to stand up or not. They stand up against softwood lumber, they stand up against shakes and shingles; they stand up against

literally everything. I suppose they'll stand up against this too. But we won't know until we try.

I haven't seen that this government is intent upon trying to assist the wineries, not only of Niagara, but the fledglings wineries around Picton and the area of Prince Edward County. I had an opportunity to go down and visit some of those recently and, although they're pretty small scale and tiny, even by Ontario standards, I was quite impressed that they are starting to develop their own wineries. They are starting to do some very unique things. Because the climate is colder and because the first couple years they tried it, they are now having to bury the roots of the vines and bury some of the actual vines themselves so they can winter. The wines produced there are pretty young and immature and are still in the experimental phase, but if you look back 10 or 20 years from now, you're going to see that this too is a fine wine-producing area of the country.

I think the Ontario government needs to do more to push the particular wineries from Ontario, and this bill does not because it does not differentiate between Ontario-based wines and world-based wines.

There's another problem with the bill here, and this affects about 15% of the people in Ontario and the wines they drink: 15% of the population of Ontario now make their own wine. Some of the people who make their own wine are pretty good at it. I have been to some competitions of people who make their own wine, and I want to tell you that some of the stuff is pretty decent indeed. It's a small cottage industry. People sometimes make it in their basements; people sometimes go to brew-your-own places. People experiment with things in the wine. I had a very nice Riesling once in which they put black peppercorns, and it really made all the difference in the world. The people are making wine with American and Limousin oak, and you can really taste the difference in some of the blends of the wines.

People make their own wine, and are content that it's as good as or better than the stuff they buy in the store. Certainly, they know that they have or have not added chemicals for the longevity of the wine. They know whether or not the sulphate contents are high. They know what they have put into the wine and whether or not it may cause them headaches if there is excessive tannin. They know all that stuff. If they're going to take their own wine and if they're going to be willing to pay the corkage, this bill will not allow them to do so.

So 15% of the drinkers of Ontario, who might think at first blush that this bill is a good thing, taking your own wine to the restaurant, had better read it again, because they cannot take the wine that they make in their house, and consume every single day, into the restaurant. I don't know whether you can't do it; I don't know what the legislation is or what the lawyers have said about this, but certainly there is a whole body of people out there who need to be heard about taking your own wine, the stuff you have made yourself, the stuff you have painstakingly and carefully prepared in order to meet your tastes and the standards you yourself set and, most importantly, that

you know has no chemical additives. That should be included in the bill. If it's not included in the bill, which I know it isn't, then those people need to be heard. This needs to go out to committee so that those people can be heard.

There are many wine societies in Canada. Probably the oldest one is the Opimian Society, of which I have been a member for some number of years, longer than I care to recount. They have not been consulted. I questioned some of the members of the Opimian Society based here in Ontario, particularly in Toronto, as to whether they had been consulted at all in this whole thing about the wine and about imported wine and whether the imported wine that they bring in—the Italian wine society imports wine directly from Italy. The Opimian Society brings it in from all around the world, and some pretty unique stuff from Ontario from time to time, as well. I don't know if that's included in this. Certainly, this government has not consulted with them, because what we see in the bill is that the wine has to be sold by the LCBO. Quite frankly, there is a lot of wine coming into this country by private import. You have not addressed that as well.

What I'm coming down to at first blush is, sure, Quebec has done it. Are there problems? Maybe a few, but maybe not that many. But what needs to be done before anything happens in this bill is we have to consult with the police, we have to consult with MADD, we have to consult with the wine societies, we have to consult with the restaurateurs, we have to consult with literally everybody. I have not heard this government talk about sending this to committee. I have not heard anything on this except that we want to pass it by Christmas, which would forgo all of that. If this government is really serious about doing a good job, then I would suggest you need to send it to committee. When you do that, I'll vote for it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Patten: I must compliment the member from Beaches-East York. I find he's one of the least partisan persons in the House. He sticks to the issues. That's what debate is all about. I must tell you that I appreciate it.

Having said that, I would like to respond to a few of your arguments. I believe the point of the legislation to begin with is that this will help the sales of Ontario wines. The reason I say that is because a lot of restaurants do not have, as you might experience, many Ontario wines. They have a lot of French wines, as you have said, they have a lot of German wines, they may have Australian wines etc. People who know Ontario wines, and I like to include myself as knowing somewhat the quality, which is world-class in this particular province, know that this will help people bring a good bottle of Ontario wine, a Pinot Noir—I won't mention a particular brand because we have many estate wineries. But these are wines that have won international awards in Europe at international competitions. So I want to say that.

The other thing is the corkage fee. There is a category in this particular bill for restaurants that do not have a

liquor licence generally, and there will be a category to accommodate being able to bring a bottle of wine into those. Therefore, it is a plus. These restaurants in fact do make money off of food.

Mr Prue: Some do.

Mr Patten: Yes, they do. There are some that do not, and we can talk about that. But I just wanted to make that point. The choice is always there. The restaurant has a choice and the patron has a choice (1) as to whether the restaurant will accept this in their establishment and (2) for the person carrying the bottle of wine and what choice that would be.

2250

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on this legislation. I would certainly concur with the comments made by the member for Ottawa Centre about the member for Beaches-East York. I have found him to be a very thoughtful member of this Legislature and I want to congratulate him on the comments he has made.

I think he has made some very important points regarding the need for further consultation on this legislation. Obviously, there are those on both sides of the bill, but I think we do need to make sure that people like MADD do feel, at the end of the day, if this is going to become law, that there has been ample consultation and that many of their concerns would have been addressed. I personally know many of the individuals who have been associated with MADD in the past, and many of them, as we know, are members because of having lost loved ones in traffic accidents. So we need to be sensitive to the fact that, although there may be a lot of support for this particular piece of legislation, there are those who obviously have some very legitimate concerns as well, and they need to feel that all of their concerns have been addressed.

I would certainly concur with some of the comments made about the wine in the province of Ontario. When you take a look at the past number of years, if you take a drive down to Niagara or you go down Leamington way or pretty well any part of the province now, you come across a new winery. We need to congratulate and support those people.

Ms Horwath: I too want to compliment and congratulate the member beside me for his very cogent and detailed review of the bill, particularly his sensitivity around the variety of issues, not just from the perspective of the restaurateur, but also the perspective of the consumer as well as the perspective of the winemakers of southern Ontario, particularly in the Niagara region, and also the people who brew their own in the province of Ontario. What he brings to the debate often, and certainly showed this evening, is his ability to understand that any piece of legislation always, by definition, affects a variety of stakeholders in our province. I think he has quite clearly indicated that, and that has been reflected in the comments of the other colleagues in the Legislature tonight.

He has indicated, through his discussion, how important it is for this kind of legislation, which some might slough off as being minor and not that great an issue—but certainly it is a great issue to very many different people in very many different ways. So I congratulate him on that. I think he's done an excellent job.

To no small effect is the fact that he's very well-read in the matter of wines. I was going to say well-drunk, but I wouldn't want to say that. But nonetheless he certainly does know his wine and he does know his restaurants and he does know his hospitality industry in Ontario. He brings all of that experience, as well as his real desire to have full debate on all the bills, as I think was mentioned by some of the government members. I congratulate him on an excellent speech and look forward to my own comments on this bill.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I too want to say that the comments from the member from Beaches-East York were quite detailed and quite good. I look forward to further debate. We still have an hour and five minutes. Hopefully, we can continue to debate this bill tonight. I look forward to hearing from the Conservatives and hopefully continuing the debate right through until midnight.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Beaches-East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr Prue: I thank all of the members for their very kind words, the members for Ottawa Centre, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton East and Scarborough Centre.

I didn't start out to try to be an expert in wine, but I have to tell you that after more than 30 years as a member of the Opimian Society, going to wine tastings and trying to discover the difference between a Zinfandel grape and a Baco Noir grape, or the very slight difference between a Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon, it's taken me all of my life to figure these things out.

It's also along the road of trying to find out how wine is imported or brought into Ontario, how the wineries in and around Beamsville or Niagara region or down on Point Pelee or in Prince Edward county—how the wine is made and marketed vis-à-vis how it is made and marketed into Canada from the outside. This is what I think is going to cause some consternation, some difficulty with the bill.

I'm asking the members opposite not to stop your bill, because it has been successful, as I said at the outset, in Montreal and Quebec. What we need to do is proceed expeditiously, but we need to consult. We need to make sure that what is intended in the bill actually happens, that the consumers are given the broadest choice so they can bring a Pinot Noir from Ontario if they want, but (a) that they don't get ripped off; (b) the restaurateur is happy to do it; (c) the wine is available; and (d) that wine that is generally imported by societies or individuals is also eligible. And we might want to even look at those people who prefer the wine they make themselves being allowed to bring it into the restaurant as well. Some of that is very airy in the bill itself.

I am asking the members opposite to do the right thing, to consult. It doesn't have to be long. Let's hear from those people, and the police and MADD too, and do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on this bill?

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I apologize from the beginning for having a bit of laryngitis, not only to my colleagues here in the House but also to viewers at home.

I'm pleased to spend a few moments this evening talking about Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act. Just for the viewers at home who might not have heard exactly what the bill does, this is the bring-your-own-wine-to-restaurants bill. The purpose is to permit restaurant patrons to bring their own wine to licensed premises where the licensee permits. It is not mandatory. Not every restaurant is going to allow you to do this. It is where the licensee, the restaurant owner, the holder of the liquor and wine or beer licence—in this case wine—permits you to bring it. So that might be a bit confusing, which restaurants accept customers who bring their own wine and which don't. But the wine must be for personal consumption only.

The bill also contains amendments giving the registrar the power to issue immediate interim suspensions of licences in the public interest. It also prohibits persons who have been required to leave licensed premises by a police officer from remaining on the premises and from returning to the premises until the day after they left, unless authorized to do so by and accompanied by a police officer. The bill also doubles the minimum fines for offences related to liquor and persons under 19 years of age.

Just a little background: Wine in restaurants is currently only provided by the holder of the liquor licence. Patrons are restricted to purchasing only those wines that are provided and at the prices listed by the licensee, ie, the restaurant. Participation in this new legislation to bring your own wine is voluntary and it will likely be subject, in almost all cases, to a corkage fee. I see in the paper that Barberian's, a very good steakhouse on Elm Street, at Elm and Bay—or Elm and Yonge, depending on which direction you approach the restaurant from—say they will probably have a \$30 or \$40 corkage fee. I think a great restaurant owned by George Bigliardi on Church Street just south of Wellesley—I think it's the best steakhouse in Toronto, maybe one of the best in Canada—Bigliardi's probably will have a \$25 corkage fee. These are just a few of the restaurants I've been able to ask.

Locally, I am told, for the very few restaurants in my riding that are in favour of this legislation—I know that Kelsey's and most of the restaurant chains in Collingwood and Alliston have certainly written to me indicating they're not in favour of bringing your own wine. But should this legislation pass, and the government is trumpeting it as a major piece of important legislation for the people of Ontario—I would think that between now and Christmas, with 231 promises, the government would have something else to do, but this is their major priority,

with not at all unanimity across the province, not at all unanimity in my riding. In fact, I'm not sure at this moment as I speak on this bill, at 11 o'clock on Tuesday night, October 26, whether or not I'm in favour of the bill. I certainly know many of the chains are not in favour of the bill and that many of the local, smaller mom-and-pop restaurants in my riding aren't in favour of the bill.

2300

But should the bill pass, because the government does have a majority and they seem to think this is the most major pressing issue for the people of Ontario, there'll likely be corkage fees. I've done it in Quebec City many times and I've done it in Montreal many times over the years. I used to work for the federal government. By the way, when you're an assistant at the federal government, you pretty well live in Quebec City and Montreal because you have free plane tickets and everything, unlike us poor souls here. Unlike MPPs here, those guys and gals can fly all over the country. They make twice as much as we do and they have a pension. You get 64 points, and you can share those with your assistants. I was an assistant for three years. To go skiing in Vancouver on the weekend, which I never did—certainly to take your girlfriend for a week of French training in Quebec City is the norm in Ottawa, particularly among Liberal assistants, and certainly among MPs.

By the way, they're not FOIable. They're not subject to freedom of information, or they weren't at that time. I think they might be slightly now, but you never hear reported in the newspaper what the expenses are of MPs and their assistants, unlike ours: open, transparent and reported. I know the table clerks and a few other officers of the Legislative Assembly, like the Integrity Commissioner and that, make sure that everything is reported in a transparent way in this Legislature. But that's not what they do federally. Anyway, I digress, and I'm glad to get that off my chest.

Having done this many times, when I was on summer French-language training with my girlfriend in Montreal or Quebec City, we would often buy a \$6 bottle of wine. This was 1987 to 1990. I worked for the federal government as chief of staff at national defence and health and welfare for three years plus a day. I was required to go on these jaunts. I was required to work so hard and make sure I brought my wine and bought it appropriately. I would go to a Becker's type of store or its equivalent and we would buy a \$6 bottle of wine with no corkage fee. I think the most I ever got charged in Quebec City—again, it's almost 20 years ago—was \$2. If you're going to bring a \$16 bottle of wine, which at my level, given that we make \$85,000 a year—less than I did was an assistant, where I made \$93,000 a year plus an Air Canada card in 1987, plus a pension. But in my case now, I'd probably never spend any more than \$13 to \$16 on a good bottle of Ontario wine. I'm not going to pay a \$25 corkage fee; it's ridiculous.

I think some of these restaurants that are in favour of it, and some of the wineries—I don't know who's in favour of it, but I think some of them are actually going

to say this is ridiculous. You're going to get the odd wine collector who thinks this is great. They'll bring in maybe a \$100 bottle of wine and be happy to pay the corkage fee, but for the average Ontarian that I represent, this doesn't do anything for them. This just ticks off the restaurant. It puts that friction between you and the waiter, as he or she explains to you, "There's a corkage fee, Mr Wilson." I think people will be shocked.

And it's not a priority. I have no e-mails on this—it's the honest-to-God truth—no letters on it, except one from a Kelsey's restaurant on First Street in Collingwood. Since this was first announced, I just have the one letter. I'm not aware of any other letters from my constituents. I have been home a heck of a lot since this was announced by the government—I haven't taken any holidays—and I have no one coming up and talking to me about this being a priority for them or anyone else. The only letter I have is one against it.

I do have a riding association meeting, for all those interested, at the Angus Lions hall at 9 o'clock on Saturday morning. We usually get about 150 people out for breakfast every couple of months. I do very much want to consult my riding association, my riding executive and the good people who bother to participate and come out on a Saturday morning to support their MPP and the democratic process. I'm going to want to hear from them as to exactly whether or not they support this legislation.

One thing I do want to talk about is Mothers Against Drunk Driving. They're opposed to it, and I have a lot of respect for them. One of my co-campaign managers in 1990 and 1995 was Chris George, the communications guru for all of the MADD advertising—radio, TV, highways and that; Chris George with CG&A Communications in St Catharines. They also have offices in Toronto and Ottawa. Chris and his wife, Lisa, run that firm. They do all of the MADD advertising. I was in his wedding party years ago and we're very good friends. As I said, he has helped me in my campaigns. He's rather politically neutral now that his major communications client is MADD.

But they're not in favour of this. In fact, it's a setback. Mothers Against Drunk Driving very much feels that this is legislation is a setback. I can't understand a Liberal government that's into so much social engineering—for all the good that the Liberals say they will do for society, you're kind of socially engineering this one backwards, as far as I can tell, when you've got the major interest group that we all very much respect in this House—I hope we all very much respect Mothers Against Drunk Driving—bringing up some serious issues with respect to this legislation. I say you go against them at your peril, because certainly they're a highly respected group. As I've said, their communications people are some of the best individuals I've ever known, and they would not mislead us in terms of the direction we should vote.

I'll just read from a June 12, 2004, *Globe and Mail* article. It's called "Wine for the Table," and I think it gives MADD's argument quite well:

"MADD Canada, the anti-drunk-driving watchdog, has criticized Ontario's move to introduce corkage in restaurants. It says the legislation, given first reading on Thursday, will make restaurants less likely to cut off the supply of alcohol to customers who are drinking too much and will encourage customers to drink more. It also accuses Consumer Minister Jim Watson of breaking a promise to MADD about the timing of the new move.

"We don't know about the timing—imagine, a minister of Ontario's McGuinty government breaking a promise—but the arrival of corkage is welcome. It expands consumer choice without compromising the safety that MADD so rightly values."

It talks about how corkage is already permitted in Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, and in jurisdictions in the United States. The *Globe and Mail*, which is usually in favour of freedom, talks about freedom of customers to bring their own bottle of wine. But it also points out, again, that MADD feels this will lead to more people drinking and driving, that there are questions about the half-empty bottle and whether or not—as I grew up, we weren't allowed to carry around half-empty bottles of liquor. I think the law was—and I used to be a park warden, so I used to enforce the Highway Traffic Act and the Liquor Licence Act and the Criminal Code.

Mr Patten: Tell us what you really did.

Mr Wilson: That's what I really did—for one summer, then they fired me. But it's OK. That superintendent, when I became an MPP, ended up in Timbuktu somewhere. So he's not around to talk about it any more. In fact, we just renamed that park on Saturday to the Bill Braden park, who was the assistant superintendent who was honest.

But anyway, I used to work at Earl Rowe Provincial Park and enforced these laws for a couple of summers. As I recall, at that time, if we saw any liquor within the purview or reach of the driver, with the laws in the mid-1980s, then it was an automatic charge. There was to be no discretion on behalf of the officer.

I think MADD points that out now too. They would prefer not to have people running around with half-full bottles of booze. They would prefer to have it locked up in the trunk and would prefer to make sure there's no booze within reach of the driver or passengers. You don't want it in reach of the passengers, either, because they can get a little silly.

I guess the point here is, if people only drink half their bottle, MADD's worried that if you don't—it's a Catch-22—allow people to bring their half-empty bottle of wine home, they might consume it all at the restaurant, get a little too tipsy and not be able to drive home, so that's not good. Secondly, if they bring the bottle home, and it is supposed to be sealed at the restaurant, what do you do if they get a little tempted on the way home? I guess the whole idea is that it should be put in the trunk. That should be clarified. I hope we're having public hearings on this. We need to enforce the responsible use of alcohol.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It doesn't sound like a very good idea.

Mr Wilson: Mr Chudleigh, I agree. I don't know how to vote on this. As I said, I've had one letter on it and no e-mails. It's hardly a big issue. I'm not sure who's in favour of it. I would think that most of the people who support me couldn't give a hoot. It's certainly not a priority. They're more interested in why the government broke its promise and brought in the health premium, or the health tax. We were debating that in question period today. They're a little more interested in Dalton McGuinty reaching into their pockets than they are in the privilege of bringing wine to a restaurant.

2310

But those in support of this—I've seen the argument that perhaps we should be modernizing our liquor licensing laws. I don't know, folks. There are more cars on the highway all the times, it's busier, it's more dangerous. I'm the transportation critic and we're still waiting for a plan from the government to tell us how they're going to deal with gridlock, in particular in the GTA area. It's more dangerous than it was back when I was a park warden in the mid 1980s. The fact of the matter is that I think we should side with MADD until there is a good study or something that says this is an appropriate thing to do, an appropriate change.

As I said, I haven't seen it in expensive restaurants in Quebec. It's considered impolite, certainly in Quebec City, in a number of the expensive restaurants I've been in as a host of Jean Charest and others. You wouldn't bring your own bottle of wine; you wouldn't be caught dead. I've been to dinner with the Premier on a few occasions. Even if the corkage is \$60, it's just not done. You don't have your little mickey bag and walk into the restaurant, and then have the waiter explain to you that there's a corkage fee. It's just not a classy thing to do, if I may tell people that.

The only time I've done it was when I was a French-language student, because the tutor—if you were a federal government employee making \$93,000, more than an MPP, back in 1987, with full pension and Air Canada card, you would be sent for French-language training, and of course you have your own private tutor, male or female, depending on your choice. You spend the whole week with them, but they don't pay the tutors very much; I think they got minimum wage.

Mr Chudleigh: This sounds familiar.

Mr Wilson: I'm not trying to make any headlines here, Ted.

The tutor would always buy the \$6 bottle of wine and you'd go in. I'd always be a little embarrassed, thinking that was a bit cheap, but there was no corkage fee. The highest corkage fee I ever ran into, and again it was the 1987-90 period, was \$2. When we were heading for lunch, I think the tutor had an \$8 limit on the lunch they could have. It was l'école Érablé, the Maple Leaf French school.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You would know that on the order

paper we have Bill 7, Mr Hudak's bill, An Act to authorize a group of manufacturers of Ontario wines to sell Vintners Quality Alliance wines. It's related to this bill and I would move unanimous consent that we accept this bill for second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard two or three noes.

I will return to the member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Bisson: Did you hear a no?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, I did.

Mr Bisson: OK, just checking.

Mr Wilson: Geez, I was on a roll. Thank you for Bill 7. That was very good. That was a good intervention. I think it brought another piece of business to the House.

I just want to stay that there is an example written by Jason Botchford in the Toronto Sun of June 28:

"Tory-Grit Split Over Booze Bill.

"Add BYOB restaurants to the list of things Liberal and Conservative voters can't agree on. Whether you're in favour of legislation allowing patrons to bring their wine into restaurants probably depends upon which political party you support."

It's a very interesting poll that Sun Media did. The poll shows that Ontario Liberal voters are more likely to back the bill, with 50% in favour and 37% opposed, while 52% of Tory voters were against it and 34% in favour.

I think that shows there's a great division out there. I hope the bill goes to committee. I've only had one letter on it. Maybe after tonight, if anybody is still up this late watching us—because the Liberal government thinks this bill is so important, we're debating it at 10:15 at night.

I don't think this bill is important, I don't think it's a priority to the people of Ontario and I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Your motion is out of order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We would know that under section 45 it says, "When a motion for the immediate adjournment of the House has been defeated, no other such motion shall be made unless some intermediate proceeding has taken place."

That is a motion. Am I correct, Mr Speaker? I will read from Beauchesne, page 174, where it talks about "Types of Motions," including, "Incidental motions are those which arise out of, and are connected with, other motions to which they relate as, for instance, motions for reading papers ... or for obtaining unanimous consent to dispense"—

The Acting Speaker: I've already ruled it out of order. Take your seat.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. Will the member from Timmins James-Bay take his seat. I've ruled it out of order. The member for Simcoe-Grey still has the floor.

Mr Wilson: How come when I adjourn the House it's out of order, and—I don't know—three or four times tonight it seemed to be quite in order? But I'll leave it up to all the experts. I've never figured this place out yet in 14 years and I doubt I'll ever figure it out.

Mr Bisson: It's on the order paper.

Mr Wilson: In the minute and 36 seconds I have left—

M. Bisson: Mais oui, Claude.

Mr Wilson: —and I appreciate the interventions from my NDP colleague—

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to move another unanimous consent motion. I move unanimous consent in order to move Bill 1, which is to declare our right as a Parliament in this Legislature. I would ask that Bill 1 be accepted for unanimous consent at second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I hear a no.

The member for Simcoe-Grey has the floor.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I again rise on a point of order, this time a little bit different than the first one. If we go to Beauchesne's, page 175, it clearly states what various types of motion are. A motion is one that deals with—

Hon Mr Caplan: That's not a point of order.

Mr Bisson: Does the minister wish to get up in this particular debate?

I read again, "Motions may be divided into several categories: ... substantive motions—"

The Acting Speaker: You may take your seat. I've ruled it out of order.

The member from Simcoe-Grey still has the floor.

Mr Wilson: In the 10 seconds I have left, Mr Speaker, are you having a nice evening? That's about all I can think to say at the moment.

Anyway, I think the bill should go to committee. I think the people of Simcoe-Grey and others need a chance to comment on it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make comments on the debate we've just heard in the last 20 minutes or so regarding this bill. I think the member has done an excellent job of outlining some of the concerns people in the province might have around the details of this bill.

Although at first blush it appears to be a fairly harmless bill, we know very well that people in our communities across the province, people like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and others, have some concerns around the specifics and look forward to the opportunity to further review the details of the bill and further review what some of the specific ramifications may or may not be in regard to how this legislation is implemented once it comes into force.

I congratulate Mr Wilson on his excellent comments and on his ability to discuss not only the specifics around this one group but also around what the bill could mean for enforcement groups like the police, for example, and bringing into the debate some of the issues around how the open bottles of wine may or may not be transported in the province of Ontario, what effect that may or may not have on issues like impaired persons driving motor vehicles and various other concerns of that nature.

I think the debate deserves some further review in committee, and I believe that the comments of Mr Wilson have been quite important in that regard. I look forward to our members taking the opportunity to further discuss these issues. I again thank the member for his excellent commentary.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm very glad to be here this evening. I just want to echo the comments of my colleague from Hamilton East about the member from Simcoe-Grey. I think this is one of the finest debates we've had in some time. I know that some people who have tuned into this have found a certain level of dysfunctionality in this House, particularly today and since we've gotten back. It's great to see this kind of collegial sense we now have, that we're willing to take these bills, particularly when you have someone with the experience—Mr Wilson has been here for many, many years and it shows in his comments, I must admit. It really does show in everything he says.

This is an important piece of legislation, so important that we would all be here, perhaps all the way till midnight, just to debate this bill, because it is important that we modernize our laws. We're the people who make the laws, but it's very important that we stay in step with our society.

2320

I've received many fine comments. The key thing about this piece of legislation is the voluntary nature of it. The government is not imposing this. What we're saying is that we can change the way the laws work here in Ontario so they're more accessible to people, that people will have that choice, and I agree with that.

I would be remiss tonight if I didn't thank my good friend the member for Don Valley West. Ms Wynne was able to cover for me so that I could go home this evening and surprise my youngest, my 10-year-old son, Breen, for his birthday. I just want that on the record. Breen is a remarkable young boy. It was just one of those golden moments that you get to have as a father. This is a hard place, as we all know, on your family. I want to thank the member for doing that. I really look forward to participating in the rest of the debate this evening.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I too would like to join the chorus of praise for my colleague from Simcoe-Grey and his comments on this bill, which is of some importance to a few people in Ontario, I'm sure. What I find passing strange about this legislation is that it is considered one of the government's priorities for its fall sitting, as evidenced by the member for Perth-Middlesex's endorsement of the importance of the bill to the citizens of Ontario.

Frankly, with my years in this Legislature, and looking at the challenges facing the government today, I would have thought we would have dealt with issues like the \$45-million deficit at Sick Kids hospital. I consider that a very serious issue. I consider that a concern: a world-class health facility in our province; people from all over the world are coming here. But more importantly, it's an important resource to the children of our province. Yet,

that isn't worthy of the government's attention and debate. However, bringing your own booze to a voluntary restaurateur seems to be an important priority for the government, so much so that the government wants us to sit until midnight.

I must confess, to the member for Perth-Middlesex, you have my sympathies. I, as one who has been here for 20 years, remember serving in cabinet and only getting to two of my daughter's soccer games over a four-year period. This is a very unforgiving profession and a very inflexible environment for us. I would say shame on your House leader for not giving you the evening off. I think you richly deserved it, and your children are poorer for it.

Mr Bisson: This is a fascinating debate, one that I look forward to participating in. As my food friend from Hamilton East said, I'm also, as is my friend from Beaches-East York, a connoisseur of wines. In fact, you would know that my friend the member for Beaches-East York actually has quite a good selection. At one particular point, about a year ago, we had the opportunity to have him come and visit my great constituency of Timmins-James Bay and go to the chalet, as I call our cottage. They had a wonderful bottle of Madeira. Who around here would even know what Madeira is?

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Oh, we've got one, we've got two, we've got three. All right. It was a 1930 Madeira. How many of you have a 1930 Madeira? I just want to say to all of you there that my good friend Michael Prue has a bottle of 1892 Madeira and he will only share it with his good friend Mr Bisson the next time he comes ice fishing up in Timmins. I just want members to know that. It's a very important point that he won't share it with you, that he'll only share it with me.

Mr Jackson: You know, I think your car stories are more interesting.

Mr Bisson: I just thought it was an interesting point.

In all seriousness, part of the problem I'm having with this bill is when I raise it with people in my constituency, there's been a rather interesting response. I have been at coffee shops in Fauquier and I raised it in Smooth Rock Falls, I've raised it in Timmins and I believe I raised it in Moosonee. And when I did, what was the comment that everybody came back with? It absolutely surprised me, because I haven't led this. They said, "Why are they doing this?" It's been the comment from everybody. They're saying, "Who's asking for this and why are they doing it? Aren't there other things the government can be doing?"

Mr Jackson: Why is it a priority?

Mr Bisson: Well, that's my point. Why is it a priority? I say bring your own wine into stores. I guess we need to send it to committee; there are a number of issues we have to deal with. I think it's problematic for the owners—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, that was corner stores. That wasn't bring your own wine.

But I look forward to my participation in the debate on this one and I know you—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The member for Simcoe-Grey has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wilson: I want to thank the member for Timmins-James Bay, Gilles Bisson, for his kind comments and for the very kind comments from the member from Hamilton East, Andrea Horwath, a very nice person. Very well done, and thank you for your comments. And thank you to the member for Perth-Middlesex, John Wilkinson, and my condolences to your family too. I can't help but laugh because you're a member of the government that's making us be here until midnight to do this ridiculous stuff. It must cost millions to keep this House sitting around night after night. I mean, how's your morale at that time? We don't care; we're in opposition. This is great fun for us. So keep up the good work, is all I can say.

I want to thank my colleague Mr Jackson from Burlington for his kind comments too. And Michael Prue, I just hope that if he's got a bottle of Madeira from the 1800s—what is your home address, Michael? That's what we want to know. He lives in Beaches-East York. I wouldn't encourage any B and Es myself. But for an NDP member, he's got an awfully expensive wine collection.

Mr Bisson: There's nothing too good for the working class.

Mr Wilson: Yes, there's nothing too good for the blue-collar folks in this place. It's much better than anything you'll find in my household.

I just want to echo what a number of colleagues have said here, that this bill should go to committee. I don't really understand why it's your top priority. I suspect you're trying to get the people of Ontario off on some tangent and away from your broken promises, your huge deficit and your health premium, or health tax. Boy, has that ever been a flip-flop from the government.

I would encourage the government to slow down and listen to MADD. They have had the respect of every Legislature across this province and the federal government. And why you would go ahead with a bill that you say is a priority, that's against Mothers Against Drunk Driving, has got me wondering. Therefore, I'm going to listen to MADD and I'm going to listen to my constituents before I decide how to vote on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Witmer: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 96, the bill that is going to allow patrons to bring their own wine to licensed premises where the licensee permits. I would begin by echoing the comments of some of my colleagues, and that is, personally, I have not heard from a lot of people in Kitchener-Waterloo about this bill. However, having said that, the only people I have heard from are some restaurant owners who were very concerned about the introduction of this legislation. They were concerned about their own personal liability and some of the implications it could have for them and their establishment.

I would also say, and I have said it previously this evening, I am concerned that MADD, who, as many people have pointed out this evening, are a highly respected organization in Ontario, does not feel they have been adequately consulted on this bill. In fact, they were very critical when the Ontario government introduced this bill, and they have expressed that concern. They felt that the consumer minister had actually broken his promise to MADD about the timing of the new move. So I think it's important that we keep in mind the outstanding reputation this group has in Ontario, the efforts it has made to ensure that all people in this province of all ages drink responsibly.

2330

Some of the comments that have been made by MADD—they say that people are likely to drink more if the price is lower. They have a lot of concerns about this legislation. They really do not feel that the concerns have been addressed.

Again, I hope—and I know I echo the other speakers—we would have hearings on this legislation. I don't think the public really is aware of this legislation. It's not a priority for the public. I have to add that there are certainly much more pressing issues of concern for people. In my own community I hear concern about the health tax, concern about the broken promises. These are the issues that are important for people in my community.

I have here an article that was written by Eric Dowd on this particular issue, and I think it's rather interesting. It was written on July 24 of this year. As we know, he is an independent journalist here at Queen's Park. He makes a lot of noise here, saying that the government is boasting about this new drinking law. They say it's going to "make the province more civilized," but they are "being far from gentlemanly" in their "campaign to sell it." He refers to the fact that the Premier called it "very civilized," and a coming of age for the province, and that the consumer minister said it will modernize drinking habits. Despite that, I think we still need to keep in mind that, regrettably, there are individuals who, when they go to establishments, whether to a restaurant or a pub, tend to consume too much alcohol. Oftentimes it's difficult for other people to even be able to identify that fact. This legislation is actually going to put a lot of responsibility on owners of restaurants to identify those individuals.

Mr Dowd makes an interesting comment. He feels the reason this was introduced, in the opinion of some people, is that it's "an attempt to divert attention from the Liberals' problem of being unable to pay for election promises."

He goes on to say, "It also follows a pattern of Liberal gimmicks attempting to look modern and trendy, particularly one when they won government in 1985 and their only promise the public noticed was to allow beer and wine to be sold in small grocery stores," which, as we know, was never fulfilled. That is one promise I too can remember from the period in 1985.

Mr Chudleigh: There's kind of a pattern here.

Mrs Witmer: There is kind of a pattern here. There seems to be an obsession with doing something when it comes to making alcohol more readily available to people in the province of Ontario. But as I say, we have to also be mindful of the need to ensure that people remain responsible when they do consume alcohol.

He goes on to say that it's OK to do this, according to the minister, because they do this in Quebec, Alberta and New Brunswick. But then he also says that in those provinces, "only a few hundred among the many thousands of restaurants ... have opted to join." So I guess, even if this bill is passed eventually, it probably isn't going to have, as he states, "the civilizing effect the Liberals grandly predict."

It's interesting to see that in the other provinces, despite the fact that this has been made available, a lot fewer than they might have originally thought did decide to participate.

Then he makes a good point, and I think it's one we need to keep in mind. It's the one that was brought to my attention by the owners of restaurants. He says: "Restaurants turn out to have other reasons to oppose diners bringing their own booze. Courts hold them responsible for actions of people who drink on their premises, and they would have more difficulty knowing what diners drink and how much if they bring their own bottles."

Again, I think that is a legitimate concern. It is the liability that certainly can be incurred by restaurant owners.

We can see, despite the claim that this is a good initiative and that it's going to modernize the drinking laws in Ontario, that we do need to give further consideration to the concerns that have been raised by people who are going to be impacted by this legislation, whether it's restaurant owners or people like MADD.

Eric Dowd goes on to say that the government "also could be tackling more serious consumer problems, including the proliferation of late-night drinking dens ... which make neighbours' lives miserable, and loan stores that charge several hundred per cent a year in interest and fees."

You know what? That is true. It probably speaks to the fact that there are many other important issues.

Mr Speaker, I would like to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mrs Witmer has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2337 to 0007.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted.

All those opposed, please rise and be counted.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 2; the nays are 4

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 12 of the clock midnight, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 0008.

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Président
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DON BEANLANDS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It is a great pleasure for me to rise and congratulate Dr Don Beanlands of Ottawa. The University of Ottawa Heart Institute recently named a new centre in honour of Dr Don Beanlands. On September 29, the heart institute officially opened the Donald S. Beanlands Ambulatory Care Centre, a modern centre that receives more than 20,000 patients each year and where Dr Beanlands spends much of his time.

Dr Beanlands has been with the heart institute since the beginning. The exemplary care for which the institute is known is due in no small part to his remarkable leadership. His commitment to his patients is always well above and beyond the call of duty. His role as a teacher and a mentor is indeed unmatched.

Dr Beanlands is someone who is loved and respected and admired by patients, by colleagues and by students. He is regarded as the soul of the heart institute, and his extraordinary legacy after 29 years will remain and be celebrated by the Donald S. Beanlands Ambulatory Care Centre.

I have had the pleasure of working with Dr Beanlands on a number of issues with respect to cardiac care in eastern Ontario, and I can think of no greater honour for him than to have this ambulatory care centre named in his honour. This is a man who is a great humanitarian, someone who could have earned great dollars south of the border, but someone who chose, with Dr Wilbert Keon, to help build one of the most world-class cardiac care facilities in North America, and we are very lucky to have him as a dedicated member of our community.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Today marks the fourth annual Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. On behalf of the New Democratic Party I want to say thanks to all those incredible workers, primarily women, who provide tremendous early learning and care to Ontario's most precious resource, our children.

Early childhood educators and child care staff play a fundamental role in shaping the social, cognitive, phy-

sical and emotional development of some of our youngest citizens. They have critical responsibilities as primary caregivers for so many Ontario children. Early childhood educators and child care staff support Ontario families by providing safe, high-quality early learning and care so that parents can work and participate in our economy. These workers provide an essential public service, and our province can't work without them.

On the eve of the meeting of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for Social Services, it would be most fitting to truly recognize the contributions made by early childhood educators and staff by finally funding a national child care program. Early learning and care are critical components of early childhood development. Other OECD countries have long recognized this fact and have invested in universal child care and early learning programs. It's a disgrace that Canada lags so far behind in establishing this essential public service.

Our thanks to Ontario early childhood educators and child care staff. They do a wonderful job and they deserve our thanks today.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I too rise today on annual daycare day to congratulate all the child care workers in Ontario who do such a phenomenal job every day.

Affordable, high-quality child care gives our children the best possible start in life and allows them to arrive at school ready to learn.

The McGuinty government not only understands the importance of child care; we're doing something about it. For example, this is the first government that has a minister responsible for children. We've taken the various government functions that deal with children's issues and have consolidated them into one ministry that is focused solely on children.

In this year's budget, we indicated that the \$58 million provided by the federal government for child care would be directed toward regulated child care for children under the age of six. In July, the minister responsible for children and youth announced that the money would go to the creation of up to 4,000 new subsidized daycare spaces. This marks a drastic change from the attitude of the previous government, which ignored and neglected child care and child care workers. In fact, they didn't bother funding child care at all. Under the previous government, all child care funds came from either the federal government or the private sector.

I am proud to be part of a government that not only recognizes the importance of child care and child care workers but is willing to do something about it. Our

children need a positive start in life. The McGuinty government is working hard to ensure that they get it.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Last week, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines sent out a news release to northern media titled "Northern Ontario is Stronger One Year Later." This release dares to suggest that this government has made significant improvements in the north and that they have been especially evident in health care. At the same time, we learned that the Minister of Health was bullying and threatening northern hospitals, especially if they dared to ask for fair funding.

In response to this propaganda, the North Bay Nugget newspaper awarded Minister Bartolucci a brick, not a bouquet, and said that events this week on the health front suggest otherwise.

In the past year, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has failed to deliver on his key election promises, such as the northern prosperity plan and the northern councils. The Liberal northern prosperity plan appears to be a collection of news releases and speeches, with no real benefits to northerners. One year after becoming a minister, the northern councils do not even have any members.

In addition, this past week the minister failed to defend northern interests and allowed the majority of northern communities to be excluded from the gas tax funding. On the Liberal Web site there are only two accomplishments listed for the north: a federal highway funding deal, and the actual naming of a minister from the north. As with the rest of this government, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has focused on the small issues and has failed to act on the major issues that are so important to the north.

1340

ALTANA PHARMA INC

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today, especially in the presence of the grade 5 class from Falgarwood school in Oakville, and my constituency staff from Oakville as well.

Today there is a reception; the Ontario College of Family Physicians will be having a reception at 4 pm right here at Queen's Park.

I rise today to recognize the achievements of Altana Pharma Inc. I recently had the opportunity to attend the grand opening of their corporate headquarters in my riding of Oakville, and would like to congratulate the company on seven years of growth and innovation.

Since its Canadian inception in 1997, Altana has committed itself to improving the economic life of Ontario through its admirable corporate citizenship and exceptional employment practices. A recent issue of Maclean's magazine recognized this commitment by naming Altana as one of Canada's top 100 employers.

I welcome the opportunity to highlight one especially important example of Altana's continuing dedication to the province. Last year the company sponsored a forum with the Ontario College of Family Physicians to address concerns surrounding the growing shortage of family practitioners. As a result of these discussions and their recommendations, Altana has since established a \$125,000 scholarship to support medical students who are interested in pursuing their careers in a comprehensive family practice. They deserve to be applauded.

HIGHWAY 60

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I rise today to draw attention to an issue of vital importance to my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, one the McGuinty government has failed to address, namely, the condition of Highway 60.

This stretch of King's Highway, which links Ottawa to Algonquin Park, Huntsville and points beyond, is in grave need of repair. It needs to be fixed and it needs to be fixed now. From Douglas to the Nipissing boundary, there's no portion of the highway that is in good condition. Some areas have reached the point that I believe the safety of the traveling public is very much at risk. There is no doubt in my mind that the condition of this highway is among the worst in the province; in fact, this may be Ontario's worst highway.

I invite Minister Takhar to join me for a tour of Highway 60 at his earliest convenience. He will be able to see for himself that this cannot wait for studies or politicizing any longer.

The government recently announced it will be giving a portion of the provincial gas tax to municipalities with a public transit system. In rural Ontario, our roads are our public transit system. We pay our share of taxes. We should receive better than we do from the Liberals.

If work does not begin on parts of this highway in 2005, there will be a point where the entire 100 kilometres of which I speak will be simply impassable. Minister, don't delay. Come and see. I'll drive you around myself.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): This summer Ontario's finest Olympic and Paralympic athletes participated in the 2004 Athens Summer Games. Today it gives me great pleasure to announce that a number of these athletes have been able to join us in the Speaker's gallery of the House this afternoon.

On behalf of my caucus colleagues and all Ontarians, I want to salute the hard work, dedication and sacrifices that these athletes, their coaches and guides made to compete at the 2004 Athens Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games. Being selected to compete at the world level is a tremendous accomplishment.

It's an honour to have you with us here today to celebrate your performances. You have made us all proud, and you have a right to be proud. Your devotion and your perseverance are attributes that Canadians all across this country can admire.

Thank you for representing our country on a world stage with such determination, courage and dignity. You are setting an excellent example for all of us by showing us how to live healthy, active lives and to always strive to be our personal best.

These athletes have gone up against the world's best athletes. For example, the performance of the Canadian athletes at the Paralympic Summer Games in Athens this summer surpassed all expectations: 72 medals—28 gold, 19 silver and 25 bronze. Our Canadian Olympic athletes also made us proud, earning three gold, six silver and three bronze medals.

You are role models for our young and old people alike.

I'd like to ask all our colleagues, as we've already done in this House this afternoon, to stand and applaud these great role models for our country, for our province and all our towns and cities they come from.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you very much. Congratulations.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Point of order.

The Speaker: Can you wait until after members' statements?

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On February 22, 1999, nine-year-old Brandon Jelley died in Trenton because a school bus on which he had been a passenger and just gotten off of ran over him. This tragedy happened because, as a nine-year-old, he crossed right in front of the bus and the driver could not see him. His family suffered a loss that thankfully very few people in this chamber understand and hopefully will never understand. His parents have reacted by, first of all, gathering a petition with over 3,000 names of people who want to see crossing gates on every bus. In addition, they have personally funded six crossing arms and have obtained support and donations for an additional 10. So they have added 16 safety gates to our buses. But they want to see every child protected from that potential tragedy.

A crossing gate is over \$3,000—not very much when measured against a child's life. They are here with us today. I would like to introduce Eve and Randy Jelley and Eve's father, Richard Robertson, who are in the public gallery up there. They are taking what is a tragedy and fighting for the betterment of our children. The first recommendation out of the coroner's inquest was that all buses be equipped with front crossing gates.

I will be presenting this petition during petition time. I would ask that we welcome the Jelleys with us and

applaud what they are doing to make our province a safer place for our children.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The opposition was at it again last night. Almost every day, they're proving to have more interest in being mischievous and irresponsible than in debating important issues. There was the member for Hamilton East playing silly games, first challenging a ruling by the Chair and then proceeding to adjourn debate on Bill 25, the Government Advertising Act. Passage of Bill 25 will help restore public faith in our democratic institutions and make government more accountable, transparent and fiscally accountable.

Under the previous government, partisan political advertising cost Ontarians millions of dollars. It's perplexing: Why would the NDP, the proclaimed champions of working people, want to delay a move to more responsible, transparent and accountable government? Incredibly, the NDP then voted with the member for Lanark-Carleton to adjourn debate on the professional learning program. So much for their alleged support of Ontario teachers.

The NDP likes to claim they're fighting for justice, yet they won't even debate a bill that would scrap the Tories' irresponsible teacher testing. Perhaps the NDP needs to understand that there's a difference between "justice" and "just us."

I'm not surprised the member for Lanark-Carleton wasn't interested in debating. His government has never treated teachers with respect. Sadly, it seems that even in opposition, that sad tradition continues.

1350

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each of the recognized parties in the Legislature to speak for up to two minutes in recognition of the wonderful athletes who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for two minutes. We have unanimous consent.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): The representatives of all the political parties in this House who had an opportunity to do so visited with the athletes, both the Olympians and Paralympians who are here today, who represented Canada and, if we can be parochial, our province of Ontario so very well in Athens. We were delighted to pay tribute to them. As I say, there were members of the assembly who were able to make it there.

Today they're with us in the gallery. We recognize the tremendous sacrifice that these athletes make in their own personal lives. They have been very determined,

they have persevered more than perhaps any of us can contemplate in our own minds, and they have represented us exceedingly well.

When we see our Olympians on television, or some may have had a chance to see them in person, we recognize that they feel a pride in their country, but also they have a personal pride in their own achievements that are part of the Canadian team that is in Athens or any other area of the world where we happen to have the Olympics. We certainly recognize that many of the people who are in the gallery today will be with us, shall we say, in Beijing in just four years from now, representing Canada exceedingly well.

They set, as well, a good example for others. They're role models. I have asked them, as I know all members of the Legislature will be asking them in their own communities, to be those ambassadors, to speak to the younger people in our communities, to ask them to participate in representing our country. Also, they will have served as mentors to those individuals. They will be those people who have encouraged the young people in our communities to get out and try their very best, to do their very best and, some day, to represent us on an international stage, the ultimate being the Olympics.

I join with all members of the Legislature in paying tribute to all our Olympic athletes.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party, I'm very pleased to offer my congratulations and best wishes to the Olympians who are present, and the Paralympians. I was very pleased to be present at the Lieutenant Governor's reception with the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the Premier and, of course, the Lieutenant Governor. From our party, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka was in attendance. We all offer the outstanding representatives who have done such a great job representing our country our congratulations and our appreciation.

Robert Marland, the son of the former member from Mississauga South, Margaret Marland, was an Olympian and won a gold medal for Canada in Barcelona. I know Robert, and I know the considerable and outstanding commitment he made to his training. All the athletes who represent us so well have done the same. Again, our congratulations and thank you very, very much.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed an honour for me to rise here in this Legislature today to salute our athletes.

I had the privilege of being at the Lieutenant Governor's suite at noon, as I know many members of the Legislature were, to meet first-hand the members who are in the gallery today. We are proud of their accomplishments, and I think all Canadians can say that we have a tear in our eye when we watch you at the Olympics and at the Paralympics. We have a tear in our eye when we see how hard you struggle to attain the ultimate goal. We have a tear in our eye when the Canadian flag goes up and the anthem is played. We are proud of you and proud of our country. I have to tell you as well, though, that we are proud even when that flag does not go up. It does not

always go up, but the spirit of the competition is that you try your best, and we recognize you for it.

All of us heaved a collective sigh and felt so awful when we watched one of our great athletes, Perdita Felicien, fall on the hurdles. We know the pain that she suffered, we know how long and how hard she worked to make it that far, and we know she will continue and struggle and go ahead in 2008 to take her rightful place on the podium.

It's not that we, as a community, should just be proud, though. As proud as we are, we must also make the commitment on behalf of this government, and stress to the Canadian government and to all Canadians that if we are truly to serve our athletes as well as they serve us, then we must get ready for the 2008 Olympic Games, we must be ready for the Commonwealth and Canada Games, and we must be prepared to put money available for training and for sports and to really make a difference.

If they are to be as proud of us as we are of them, then I think that this is a two-way street. We need to give them the tools, and we need all of us today to make the commitment that 2008 will be a better year for Canada than 2004 was.

The Speaker: I also want to express my view that I'm very proud of the athletes who represented us.

VISITORS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm very proud of future Olympians and leaders in the gallery from Pleasantville Public School in Richmond Hill, and their teachers, Mr Bryan Gerson and Ms Olga Hiltz. I want to welcome them to the chamber today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): This wasn't a point of order, but we can always recognize future Olympians.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Ms Churley from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr7, An Act to revive Key Aircraft Services Inc.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION

Mrs Dombrowsky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of enforcement and other matters / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à l'exécution et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mrs Dombrowsky?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I have a statement for ministerial statements.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (HOSPICES EXEMPTION), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (EXONÉRATION ACCORDÉE AUX HOSPICES)

Mr Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 134, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Flynn?

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): This bill proposes to grant municipalities the capacity to exempt independently managed, not-for-profit hospices from the payment of property taxes at the discretion and the pleasure of the local municipality. It's not imposing that right; it's giving the municipality the right to do that. That's the entire intent of the bill.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Today I am introducing new legislation to help protect the health and quality of life enjoyed by residents of our great province. Our government took office with a

firm commitment to ensuring safe, clean, livable communities. I am proud of all that we have accomplished.

We are making excellent progress in developing safeguards to protect drinking water from source to tap.

We have introduced a new five-point action plan for cleaner air. It includes air emissions limits for several major industrial sectors that have never had limits before.

Aggressive targets have been set for diverting waste away from disposal.

We have introduced regulations to make Ontario's hazardous waste rules the toughest in North America. And we have created the environmental leaders program to reward and recognize the top environmental performers among Ontario companies.

We know that the vast majority of companies in this province are responsible corporate citizens. It is only fair to them that we target companies that fail to live up to their environmental responsibilities.

In the past, some have turned a blind eye to pollution, calling it a part of the cost of doing business in Ontario. Well, this is unacceptable. It is not fair to our responsible businesses and it is not fair to the people of Ontario.

This government will not tolerate companies and individuals who put our environment and the health of Ontarians at risk.

Today I am pleased to introduce legislation that would, if passed, ensure that polluters face immediate consequence for their actions. Our proposed legislation would impose environmental penalties of up to \$20,000 per day for individuals or \$100,000 per day on companies responsible for illegal spills.

I want to make it very clear to the honourable members: Environmental penalties are not the same as fines. Fines are handed down by the courts, while environmental penalties would be assessed by ministry officials within a few days after a spill, enabling faster action on unlawful spills.

This is a whole new approach to preventing industrial pollution. Our proposed legislation will encourage compliance to help ensure that spills do not happen. It is in a company's power to prevent spills and it is also in their best interests to do so.

I also want to point out that environmental penalties will not replace our existing enforcement. Where warranted, companies could still face prosecution in addition to penalties.

Under the proposed legislation, the fact that a polluter took all reasonable steps to comply with environmental requirements would not be a defence. If a polluter appeals an environmental penalty, this legislation proposes that the onus be on the polluter to show that the spill did not harm the environment.

Company officials would be held more liable under the proposed legislation. It would put the onus on corporate directors and officers to prove that they took all reasonable steps to comply with environmental requirements. If convicted, they could face jail time of up to five years.

Money collected from environmental penalties would be allocated to a special community fund created by the

legislation. Among other purposes, this fund would be used to compensate victims of unlawful spills and could assist those who clean up spills. The proposed legislation would enable the province and municipalities to recover costs incurred to clean up spills and repair the damage to the environment.

Make no mistake: This proposed legislation is tough. We are holding polluters accountable for spills.

I know that some members have expressed concern about companies being able to write off environmental penalties. Members should know that I wrote to the federal Minister of Finance about this in March, and I'm pleased that the last federal budget and our provincial budget agreed to make these changes. The changes are retroactive to the date of the federal budget, which is March 22, 2004. This was confirmed as recently as this morning with the federal Minister of Finance's office.

Our message is simple: You spill, you pay.

Ontario should be a place where environmental negligence is not tolerated and where good environmental performers are rewarded with incentives. This is the Ontario we envision.

The environmental leaders program we launched last month shows the value we place on strong environmental performance. Environmental leaders are companies that know that environmental responsibility will improve life in our communities and also our ability to prosper and compete on the world stage. Companies that minimize their risk and improve their business practices are more efficient, attract more investment and make better corporate citizens.

There are still some bad operators who believe that they can get ahead of the game by lagging behind on their environmental responsibilities. We will not allow this kind of attitude to continue. From now on, taking a step forward will be rewarded, standing still will be discouraged, and taking a step backwards will be penalized.

Our government is taking tough action on industrial pollution to build the kind of Ontario where our industries are world leaders in environmental responsibility and where our communities are clean, safe, healthy places to live.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Minister, here we have yet another in a series of environmental announcements aimed at convincing Ontarians that this government is getting tough on the environment, despite some serious flaws in the manner that you, Minister, are choosing to carry out your environmental agenda.

It's also interesting that this would come forward now, a year after a subsidiary of a company for which Mr Greg Sorbara, finance minister, was director. This subsidiary was responsible for three spills in the St Clair River, spills that the ministry was not notified of for a number of days.

With this minister's announcement, the Liberals are once again focusing on areas that the Ontario PC government took great strides in addressing during the Harris and the Eves years.

Interjections.

Mr Barrett: I will remind the members opposite of the name of their bill. You have named this bill "tough environmental penalties." We named our bill "toughest environmental penalties," and many of you were here. I'm assuming you're not going to eliminate that legislation as you did the disabilities act.

In the year 2000, we introduced the Toughest Environmental Penalties Act. Our government's Toughest Environmental Penalties Act amended the penalty structure of not only the Environmental Protection Act but also the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Pesticides Act.

We increased the maximum fine for a first conviction of a major offence for a corporation, such as a subsidiary I made mention of earlier, from \$1 million a day to \$6 million a day; for subsequent convictions, from \$2 million a day to \$10 million a day. I'm assuming you're not throwing out these toughest penalties.

We increased the maximum fine for a first conviction of a major offence for an individual. Before, it was \$100,000, and we increased that to \$4 million a day. For subsequent convictions, we raised it from \$200,000 a day to \$6 million a day.

The minister mentioned in the statement that was circulated on this side of the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Barrett: Speaker, can you hear me OK?

The Speaker: I can hardly hear you, but go ahead.

Mr Barrett: In the prepared statement, the minister made mention of five-year jail terms, again following our lead. We increased the maximum jail term for a person convicted of a major offence from two years to five years. When necessary, the ministry was also instructed to take enforcement action to ensure that the regulations protecting drinking water were followed. I know everyone in the House was aware of that initiative.

1410

I haven't heard anything from the minister with regard to the ability of companies to deduct environmental fines. There was some late-breaking news. Environmental fines as a business expense—I'm glad this was highlighted. Is this considered a loophole? Perhaps the third party will address this issue. It raises the concern, as we all know, that those businesses that do pollute may well continue to do so and write it off as just another cost of doing business.

How will this be enforced? Will there be a hiring of new inspectors and more inspectors? Where is the money coming from? Minister, we would like to know: How much will this cost and what does this add to the budget?

I will point out that this legislation represents yet another attempt by this government to take away policing powers—there's concern here; this may merit broader debate—putting more power into the hands of government.

I will note that in our government's Toughest Environmental Penalties Act, the fines were dependent on a conviction. Once again, with this legislation, I suspect the

Liberals are prejudging the legal process, a process that, if jeopardized, could topple.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm surprised that the minister came into this House today and brought forward this bill without, at the same time, bringing in a piece of legislation to get rid of the loophole in the corporations tax that allows industry and corporations to get back any money they pay in penalties and fines.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's a write-off.

Ms Churley: It's a write-off. They get it all back.

When the minister mentions that some members in the Legislature expressed concern about this before, she's talking about me, the member for Toronto-Danforth. I've raised this on many occasions and I've brought forward a private member's bill, which I've asked to be passed and they've refused to do so. What the minister says is, "Oh, I've written a letter to the federal Liberals in Ottawa and they're going to do something. We've confirmed that as early as this morning."

Why don't they just do it themselves? I was shocked when I went to hear the announcement up at their retreat a while ago that it wasn't part of that announcement, because, you see, they have jurisdiction to do this under their own laws. In fact, once the federal government moves, if they move—I understand that this is tabled, that they have to have public comments and debate it in the House or whatever—no matter how long it takes, at the end of the day, the Ontario government still has to pass an amendment to the provincial statute here. So they're going to have to move anyway. Why not make this into a good, positive announcement by making it very clear at the same time that they are closing this loophole here in Ontario so that these penalties mean something, so that it's not just the cost of doing business? Just do it.

At the end of my statement here, I will be asking for unanimous consent once again to pass my bill, which is called the Make Polluters Pay Act.

Beyond that, there are some other problems that the government and the minister are not addressing here. There are several that I've outlined before. We have to make sure that the government gets into offering incentives for companies to clean up their act. We have to have carrots and we have to have sticks. They're talking about sticks today, which, of course, until the loophole is fixed, aren't sticks; they mean nothing. At the same time, we just heard that Hamilton has now had the worst air quality day in the history of Ontario, I understand.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Well, something's got to be done about that, and one of the things that has to be done is incentives. Carrots have to be offered to help those corporations—

The Speaker: Hold it a minute, please. Order. There's a lot of discussion in the chamber today and I am having difficulty hearing the member.

Ms Churley: The minister has to make sure that those carrots are offered at the same time, because we need to be focusing on prevention in the first place.

If we look at the latest report from the Environmental Commissioner, we see a lot of problems identified which we have not received any answers to yet. For instance, sewer use bylaws in Ontario: The commissioner talks about at least 12,000 industrial, commercial and institutional facilities hooked up to municipal sewer systems across Ontario—all kinds of toxins going into our water because this government—he says that up until 1995, governments paid attention to this problem, under the Tories they stopped and the Liberals still aren't, so nothing is being done to assist and make sure that municipalities are bringing in these sewer use bylaws so that those toxins aren't going into our water.

Another problem—and there are so many—is that we need the adoption of Canada-wide standards for dioxins, furans and mercury for hazardous waste incineration. These have not been adopted yet. Ontario's two PCB disposal facilities and privately operated on-site incinerators are still not subject to these updated standards. These are the kinds of things we need to have happen.

There is a company here in Ontario called Eco Logic that's been around for some time that uses a process of thermal reduction to eliminate some of those hazardous materials. They cannot sell their equipment here in Ontario because the standards have not been updated.

I would call on the House right now—and I'm asking for unanimous consent, Mr Speaker, that we pass my bill called the Make Polluters Pay Act, and that we pass it now. I'd ask for second and third readings and final passage today. Have the government put their money where their mouth is. I ask for unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I have not put the motion forward yet.

The member from Toronto-Danforth is asking unanimous consent to pass her private member's bill. I heard a no.

VISITORS

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to welcome two guests in the members' gallery today from the University of Toronto: Keir Wilmot and Jean Thomas. I'd like to welcome you to the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. It's quite a privilege to have all members' visitors to our chamber. But we'd also like them all to know that this is not a point of privilege.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, a

recent arbitration decision concluded that your new health tax is a premium and, in that case, is requiring the employer to pay the bill.

The confusion over who pays this new tax breaks down into the familiar "he said/he said" argument and which one is true. The problem we have here is that the "he" in both cases is you. When it was important to try to fool the voters into thinking this wasn't a tax increase, you referred to it as a premium. Then when it became obvious the use of the word "premium" might put the government on the hook for paying this tax on behalf of public sector workers, you declare that this is a tax.

Premier, is it your goal here to have ordinary voters think of the new tax as a premium and arbitrators and court judges to see it as a tax, and that way, you can claim you've won both sides of the argument? You've created a potentially costly mess, and I ask you to clear up the confusion today: Is this a tax, breaking your signature promise, or is it a premium?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It gives me the opportunity to speak to Ontarians, I know some of whom are concerned about this particular issue.

The first thing I would let them know is that there has also been another arbitration, this one in connection with the Jazz airline case, which sided in that particular instance with the employer and said that individuals themselves are responsible for paying their taxes.

We introduced this as an amendment to the Income Tax Act. It has always been our intention that taxpayers would pay this and not employers. That remains our intention and that is what we want to see happen.

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Mr Runciman: The Premier and members of his government have been all over the map on this issue in terms of how they describe it. Yesterday your Acting Premier said you have always described the health tax as a tax. He was dead wrong, and we distributed quotes from your Minister of Finance indicating quite the opposite. You've always tried to have it both ways to cover up your broken promise.

Premier, in your rush to bring in this tax and try to confuse voters with your intentionally contradictory descriptions of it, did you ever, even once, consider the cost implications if arbitrators and courts concluded that this is a premium? Did you ever do that, even once?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, there are conflicting opinions on this matter when it comes to arbitrations. Some of them may be the subject of ongoing appeals.

The members opposite may not be interested in this, but I know employers in particular have a great deal of interest in it.

If, at some point in time, we need to do something to inject further clarity into this matter, then we will, but our intention has always been that this should be paid by taxpayers.

Mr Runciman: I think the Premier is trying to prove that old P.T. Barnum axiom wrong: He thinks all the people can be fooled all the time.

We know the Premier breaks his promises with impunity and blames someone else. Your ministers provide incorrect information to the House and you say they were misunderstood. You are asked direct questions on important issues and you refuse to answer and play your juvenile blame game. Premier, once again, a direct answer, please: Did you do your job? Did you ever consider the cost implications of arbitrators in courts concluding that this is a premium?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite may not like to receive this information, but it's accurate. There are conflicting opinions right now when it comes to this particular provision, this amendment to the Income Tax Act. If this situation persists, then we will take the necessary steps to introduce whatever clarity is required. Our intention remains the same today as it was from the outset: This is something that should be paid by taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: If there are conflicting opinions with respect to what this tax means, it's because of the government. They have to take complete responsibility for that because those conflicting opinions have been coming from virtually every member of that front bench. We have an arbitrator's ruling that shows an employer of public sector employees will now have to pay the health care premium on behalf of its employees. Premier, you know that once one union wins this right for its employees, it will become a pattern for future labour negotiations.

Today you are describing the health tax as a tax and you said every individual taxpayer must pay. You've reiterated that today.

Just a partial list of employees in the public sector: nurses, teachers, community college instructors, university professors, hospital employees. If the unions representing these employees win the right to have the employer pay your health tax on their behalf, this has the potential to cost the public sector organizations approximately \$500 million.

Premier, will you make a commitment today to amend your legislation to ensure the money will not be diverted from cash-strapped hospitals, classrooms and front-line patient care to pay for this premium?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member refuses to take into account all the facts. He talks about one particular arbitration, but he denies the existence of another. I will bring that to his attention again: the Jazz airline case. In that case, the arbitrator sided with the employer and said that individuals themselves are responsible for paying their taxes. In this case, we have a conflicting opinion.

As I've said twice already, and I'll repeat it again for the benefit of the member, if we need to do something to introduce further clarity into this to make it perfectly clear that this is something that is to be paid by the taxpayers, as we indicated at the very outset, then we are prepared to do that. I would think that employers throughout Ontario would want to pay heed to this very important message I'm conveying to them.

Mr Runciman: The Premier accuses me of not paying attention to another arbitration ruling. But the reality is that he didn't pay attention to this when they were designing this legislation—the implications. He has a responsibility. This reflects on his competence and the competence of the Liberal government of Ontario.

He has not responded to the direct question I placed earlier with respect to whether or not they gave any consideration to the implications of the courts or arbitrators concluding this was a premium. We know that many collective agreements across this province have those rights incorporated within them. We now know the Ontario Nurses' Association has filed grievances in order to have your Liberal health tax covered by their employers. We know their employers are hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies. The taxpayers fund those employers. This is, as I said earlier, dangerous negligence by not considering the implications.

Premier, you have played fast and loose with the facts, and now taxpayers are facing the consequences. I would ask you today to answer John Tory's challenge and scrap this ill-thought-out, ill-conceived Liberal health tax.

Hon Mr McGuinty: There's been a reference to the mystery man. I'm sure he's somewhere.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): He needs a home.

Hon Mr McGuinty: He's looking for a home. We welcome his presence here in the House whenever he decides he'd like to join us here, but I gather he's otherwise occupied at the present time.

It's always a lot of fun watching the Leader of the Opposition work himself into a lather over one particular issue or another. But here, again, are the facts: We have conflicting opinions rendered by arbitrators. I guess some of them, if not more of them, will be the subject of appeals. If we need to do something here as a government to introduce further clarity into this matter to give full expression to our intention that this be something that's paid by taxpayers, then we will do just that.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today we learned that a bacteria outbreak at North York General Hospital has infected at least 10 newborn babies, and up to 400 recently born babies may have been infected as well. This is on top of the continuing crisis of C difficile bacterium, which has killed at least seven people in Ontario and over 700 people in Quebec in the last two years. Everyone recognizes this bacterium is there because there are problems with hospital cleaning, yet your government wants to force hospitals to cut their cleaning budgets, reduce the wages and cut the jobs of hospital cleaning staff.

Your government is receiving an additional \$825 million of federal money that is to be dedicated to health care this fiscal year. Will you stop forcing hospitals to cut the jobs and wages of their cleaning staff? Will you work

with them co-operatively so that we can better protect the patients in Ontario hospitals?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I had the opportunity, in a question from the honourable member earlier in the week, to make an important point that I recommend to all members of the House again. It is simply that the honourable member's attempts to confuse what is a challenging issue around issues of labour, I think, is highly inappropriate, particularly given the reality that the challenges we face with respect to infectious disease in Ontario's institutions are challenges that are being faced in a very equal fashion, regardless of the nature of the provision of housekeeping services.

On this issue, it's important to note that the provincial infectious disease advisory committee, something that has come to life under our government as part of our renewal of public health in the province, is co-chaired for the first time by public health and hospital officials. Dr Zoutman, an established leader from Kingston, and the chief medical officer of health from northwestern Ontario are leading us in a process that ensures that Ontario will build on the strong standards that we have. We're tackling this issue with vigour, and I offer the assurance to Ontarians that we're tackling this with all the appropriate attention that they would want.

1430

Mr Hampton: The issue that the Minister of Health was attacking with vigour last week was suggesting that hospitals go after the wages, the working conditions, the benefits and the jobs of hospital cleaners. He suggested that hundreds of millions of dollars could be taken out of those workers and their work. And yet we have Mr Justice Campbell in the SARS report, the Ontario Nurses' Association report, SARS Unmasked and several other reports that have all concluded that hospital cleaning lies at the heart of protecting patients from these kinds of deadly bacterium. Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom repeat the same thing. Yet we've got a Minister of Health who goes across the province saying, "Cut the hospital cleaning budget. Cut those wages. Cut those benefits of the hospital cleaners." Minister, are you interested in protecting patients, or are you just out there for a money grab on the backs of the lowest-paid hospital workers?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Notwithstanding the honourable member's desire to confuse the issue, I think it is important to note that several of the most distinguished health care institutions that we have in our province include those that are receiving services from people that are not part of Sid Ryan's union. I think this is an important distinction to make. At the end of the day, it's very clear: We have standards and it's critically important that those standards be appropriate to offer the appropriate protections to the people of Ontario.

The member, in his question, offers up a series of reports. I think it's incredibly important to note that Dr

David Walker, who chaired an expert panel on this very matter on our behalf, is someone who has spoken out clearly in support of the initiatives that the government has undertaken to respond to the things that we needed to learn as a result of SARS. We recognize that there's more work to do and that's why every single day we seek to continuously improve the quality of the environment in order to control infectious disease. That is what we're undertaking in a dedicated way every day, and we will continue to do so.

Mr Hampton: People are dying from C difficile in hospitals because there's a problem with cleanliness. In North York General Hospital, newborn babies have contracted serious infections. Why? A problem with cleanliness. And you go around the province suggesting that the way to save money in hospitals is to go after the cleaning staff. Do you know what a cleaner in a hospital makes? They make \$17 an hour. They make \$35,000 a year. They're not overpaid. They do important work.

I want to remind you of something. The Conservative government cut funding for water inspection. The result: Walkerton, deaths and many people very seriously ill from water that was not fit to drink. The former government cut money for meat inspection. The result: tainted meat at the abattoir near Aylmer. Have you learned nothing from this? Why do you insist on going after the wages of hospital cleaning staff when report after report and your own experience says it's the wrong thing to do?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm one of those who is not prepared to stand in judgment in advance of the evidence. That is not something that the honourable member seeks to use. There's no evidence whatsoever that, as the honourable member has now said, the difficulties with respect to bacteria at North York General Hospital, where the employees are unionized, are because of cleaning. This is a conclusion point that he has drawn, and he has drawn that because it supports his political argument of the moment.

But the fact of the matter is, all across the province of Ontario, dedicated people are working on behalf of Ontarians to do the best that we can to improve on the standards that have already been established to improve our capacity to deal with infectious disease. We will continue to work with those people across the breadth of the health care system, dedicated to the task at hand, and we will not be sidetracked by the political arguments the honourable member seeks to advance.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your Ontario health premium is creating quite a bit of controversy lately. This, of course, is in your budget. On page 3 of your budget you say, "We are proposing an Ontario health premium." Then you go to page 9 of the budget and you say, in short, "Every cent from this premium would be invested in health. Every cent from this premium would be used to provide ... results in health care." You mention the

words "health premium" 10 times in your budget document. You also compare your health premium with health premiums in British Columbia and Alberta. But recently you've tried to say it's a tax.

So my question to you, Premier, is this: Are you saying that the people of Ontario should not believe what your Minister of Finance said in the budget, that they should not believe what the McGuinty government said in its first budget?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I had the opportunity to address this issue just a few moments ago and I'm pleased to do so again. Our intention remains the same today as it was at the outset. That intention is that taxpayers will be paying this premium. We're going to allow arbitration to continue to happen. If there is some uncertainty connected with this matter and we have to act, then we will do so, to make it perfectly clear that this is something that is to be paid by taxpayers.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is about your Minister of Finance's words. This is about your government's words in the budget. I want to remind you this is the decision of Speaker Carr, May 8, 2003, where he talks about the sacredness of the budget, the unique status of the budget, that it's the one thing that can become law as soon as it's spoken. I want to remind you of the words of your Minister of Finance, because he said in the media lock-up, "We had the option of looking at personal income tax increases, or going with the Ontario health premium. Our choice on the health premium was very clear. We chose it because it gives us an opportunity to identify a revenue stream separate and apart from personal income tax, that will be applied, every single cent of it, to health care."

Premier, I ask you again, are you now saying that a budget that has the capacity to become law as soon as it's spoken, the first McGuinty budget, should not be believed by the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I understand why the leaderless Tories would go down this line, but I'm very surprised at my friend, the leader of the third party. He's been in this place too long to make those sorts of criticisms. On the day—

Mr Hampton: It's the Speaker who says that the budget is sacred.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Let me just tell you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Sorbara: He doesn't want an answer.

On the day that the budget was introduced, we also introduced Bill 83, part of which reads as follows, "A provision that amends the Income Tax Act to establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium in English and contribution-santé de l'Ontario in French."

Mr Hampton: It was Speaker Carr who said that the budget is sacred. You know Speaker Carr. He's the Liberal MP for Halton. He said the budget is sacred.

This is what the Brantford Expositor says: "McGuinty hoped to fool at least some of the people that he was not

raising taxes. It didn't work. He fooled no one." The Hamilton Spectator says that the Liberals' "weasel words have come back to bite them on their sit-down parts.... The government has grotesquely mishandled this issue."
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I say to the Premier, if this were any other organization, they would be reporting you to the Consumers' Association of Canada for false advertising.

I want to ask you about your words, because you went on radio across the province, and you said to the people of Ontario, "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health care premium will go to health care." Are you now saying that the people of Ontario shouldn't believe your words?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I say to my friend, I'm Greg Sorbara, and I want the people of Ontario to know that every single penny of the Ontario health premium is going to go toward improving health care in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I find it much more effective if you address the Speaker rather than playing to the opposition. Thank you.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Mr Speaker, through you, might I also invite the leader of the third party to actually read the budget papers where it says, "Since the premium is proposed to be implemented through the Income Tax Act and administered under the existing tax collection agreement between Ontario and the federal government, income tax withholding and instalment rules ... apply" to the premium. Thank you very much. I invite him to read it.

LOBBYISTS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: You are holding a fundraiser for the Ontario Liberal fund at \$300 a ticket, and this we know is not a problem. The problem is that the person holding the fundraiser is Bruce Davis, and on the invitation, Bruce Davis is advertised as a lobbyist. Here we have a lobbyist advertising that he has access to you, and for a \$300 fee he will open the door. Minister Peters, do you condone the practice of lobbyists advertising their access to you for a fee? We want to know, is this how your McGuinty government does business?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I would certainly encourage the member to be conscious of the stones he throws, and I would also encourage the member to be conscious of the fact that John Tory, who is not even a member of this Legislature, is out there fundraising on a full-time basis. How can a non-elected official be fundraising? I think quite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm just trying to get a sense of the relevance of the question to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I'll get a supplementary and maybe I will hear it from that.

Mr Barrett: I was trying to get a sense of the relevance to that answer as well. Minister, you also advertise

your so-called concern, your support for tobacco farmers in your riding and my riding.

Bruce Davis is a registered lobbyist for the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco. It's an organization—I looked up the registration file for lobbyists—dedicated to anti-tobacco initiatives.

As Minister of Agriculture, it's your job to defend farmers; it's your job to defend tobacco farmers. We now know you've obviously chosen sides with the antis. This invitation makes it clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask you not to wave that around. It may be a prop. Will you put the question in 10 seconds?

Mr Barrett: You have obviously chosen sides. This invitation makes it clear—I won't show the invitation—that tobacco farmers can no longer count on your support. Minister, why do you now join the anti-tobacco group to put tobacco farmers out of business?

Hon Mr Peters: I'd like to know where the honourable member has been. We campaigned very clearly that we were going to have an aggressive anti-smoking strategy in this province. This province is committed to saving people's lives. We've also made it very clear, and the honourable member should very well know it, that as a result of the fiscal mess your government left behind for us, we can't move as quickly on some of the priorities we have put forward. But we are committed to ensuring that we are there to provide a transition program, to ensure that we help communities and growers move from producing tobacco.

I stand up and support that. I don't stand up and support people like Leslie Noble receiving \$341,000 from your government; Michael Gourley, \$4.6 million from your government; Jaime Watt, \$815,000 from your government. I don't agree with that at all.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, you should rename your "you spill, you pay" bill to "you spill, you pay nil." That's because it fails to shut a tax loophole that lets companies write off pollution fines on their tax returns. Companies can write off fines for polluting our air, water and land as a normal cost of doing business.

Minister, you know I've raised this issue before. When I did, you promised—and I have it in writing here—that you would shut this grossly unfair and unjust loophole. To make keeping that promise easier, because I know you need help sometimes, I introduced the Make Polluters Pay bill to shut the loophole. Will you pass my private member's bill today and keep your promise, or will this be yet again another broken promise?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to talk about what this government is doing to close that loophole. We contacted the

federal Minister of Finance in March, and I'm delighted that it was included in the federal budget in March.

I would recommend that the honourable member might do a little bit of homework and read page 121 of our budget document, where our Minister of Finance has committed that Ontario will "parallel the following ... tax measures: The limits on the deductibility of fines and penalties, patronage dividends and unused charitable donations," for corporations. That's the commitment of this government. It was made during our budget.

We have confirmed with the federal Minister of Finance: We are going to work with them. Your bill is only addressing Ontario corporate taxes; our action is going to close the loophole, both provincially and federally.

Ms Churley: Minister, nobody believes your budget any more.

Let me say to you, your government had no problem amending the provincial income tax to bring in new taxes on average Ontarians, but you won't close a loophole for polluting corporations. Tell me, what is wrong with this picture?

1450

Minister, you have a responsibility to protect Ontario's environment now, and there is no guarantee—I have checked—that any federal legislation will pass before this fiscal year closes. And you will still have to amend Ontario's statutes. That's going to take a while. It's time for you to show leadership now.

As I've said, I've done your work for you. I've given you the ball, now why don't you just run with it? Will you pass my private member's bill today to make polluters pay, or are you going to break another promise?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I would recommend that the honourable member do some homework and check her facts. I'm very happy—I'm proud, in fact—to stand in this House today. I want to just share with you some of the responses that our government has received to the initiative that we have proposed in this Legislature today. This is from Robert F. Kennedy Jr, president of Waterkeeper Alliance: "This announcement signals a renewed commitment to enforcing Canada's environmental laws and an end to the race to the bottom for lower standards in North America."

I have another quote from Pollution Probe. Ken Ogilvie has contacted us and said, "For too long, we have treated our environmental commons, our rivers, streams and lakes, as dumping grounds for pollution, failing to recognize that spills impose a dear cost on us all." That's the kind of endorsement that we've received from known environmentalists around the world.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is to the Minister of the Environment in regard to the legislation on environmental penalties. My community has been greatly affected by a series of industrial spills into the St Clair River. In fact, many of my constituents and those further down the St Clair River live with the constant concern of the next spill. I'm pleased to see that

it is now time for our government to take action to ensure that industries do not ignore their responsibilities in preventing industrial spills. So I want to ask the minister, what will this legislation do to protect my community?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to respond to the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who has been a great advocate for her community and the protection of its environment. Very clearly, this legislation means that in Ontario, if you spill, you pay. It is that simple.

All of this has come about because of the very good work of the Industrial Pollution Action Team. This is a team that was established after an unacceptable number of spills had occurred in the St Clair River. This team was charged to provide this minister with recommendations on how, going forward, we can better protect our environment and establish a regimen that is going to be more preventive in nature.

That's exactly what the legislation that we've introduced here today will do. It will slap fines immediately on perpetrators of industrial spills and, more specifically, create a fund that communities affected by spills can access to help them remediate the cost of the spill.

Ms Di Cocco: Many of my constituents believe industrial spills can no longer be considered a cost of doing business in the province of Ontario. As a matter of fact, the cost of doing business in this new era in Ontario is about protecting the environment and doing what is necessary to prevent spills. We have many examples of industry in Sarnia-Lambton that have, on their own initiative, made the necessary investments and changes to prevent spills into the St Clair River, which is a foundation of sustainable development. But the problem of industrial spills does persist, not only in my community but right across the province.

I'd like to ask the minister: Who would be subject to these environmental penalties and how are we encouraging companies to raise their standards to ensure that they're responsible for preventing industrial spills?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: This legislation will apply to the MISA sector of industries, the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement sector. There are about 176 facilities in this sector in the province of Ontario, which includes petroleum refining, iron and steel mining, pulp and paper, inorganic chemical manufacturing and electrical power generators. They would be included in the MISA sector.

I'm very happy that the honourable member has asked about what incentives the government is offering. Contrary to what may have been reported earlier, we have a very good program that we've just established. I announced on September 29 the industrial leaders program. This is to incent those good corporate citizens who have consistently demonstrated a record of compliance and who go above and beyond good corporate business practices. We're going to reward them. We're going to enter into an agreement with them, and we're going to inspect them less because of their good environmental record.

PIT BULLS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, on this side of the House we are strong supporters of effective legislation that protects the health and safety of our citizens. Further, we sympathize with the many victims who have been attacked by various breeds of dogs due to irresponsible pet owners.

Unfortunately, in your rush to score cheap political points, you've introduced legislation that not only raises serious questions about how it will be implemented and enforced, but also ignores a fundamental problem. According to the Canadian hospitals injury reporting and prevention program, pit bulls are not even amongst the top four breeds of dog that are responsible for the majority of dog attacks in Canada. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association rightly says that you'll have to ban all dogs to eliminate dog bites. Is this where you're taking us, Minister?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I do thank the member for the question. I just want to make it very clear, and this legislation makes it very clear, that we are addressing pit bulls. The ban will be applied to pit bulls and only to pit bulls. The legislation goes on to deal with responsible ownership of dangerous dogs, fines and jail time for serious incursions, but this ban only deals with pit bulls, period.

Mr Tascona: Minister, your legislation paints responsible dog owners with the same brush as those who are irresponsible. Furthermore, you haven't thought through how to implement and enforce this legislation. Most small towns, rural areas and even some cities have no formal animal control capabilities. In these municipalities, who are people supposed to call for help, who takes charge of the animal and, most importantly, who pays?

Hon Mr Bryant: Pit bull owners are going to need to be responsible for their pit bulls. Once this law passes and the transition period of three months after the law is proclaimed is enforced, there will be no additional pit bulls in the province of Ontario.

I've said before and I'll say again to the member that those who own pit bulls now will keep their pit bulls. I expect they will love them and they will muzzle them and they will leash them. And then Mother Nature will do her work and one day there will be no more pit bulls. We believe on this side of the House that that means we will have a safer Ontario, that we won't have horrible pit bull incidents.

This government is on the side of protecting Ontarians. I understand the Tories are on the side of pit bulls. Let the debate begin.

INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the secret

kickback commission scam that big insurance companies have been using to ensure that brokers write only the most lucrative and profitable policies has cost Canadians billions of dollars and has cost Ontarians hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, as well. We were told yesterday that the government has asked the Financial Services Commission to inquire into this matter.

Minister, don't you agree that this is so serious a breach of the obligation that most consumers expect exists between their broker and themselves, and the size of the rip-off is so large, that this warrants a transparent, independent, open and public inquiry? Why won't you refer this matter to a legislative committee?

1500

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm delighted that my friend has asked me this question. In fact, the first thing I want to make clear is that there's no evidence in Ontario of the kinds of allegations that are being discussed in New York state. Notwithstanding that, we did ask the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to conduct a review.

In addition to that, I want to tell my friend that our government, through my colleague the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, has asked brokers and property and casualty insurers to voluntarily agree to a better system of disclosure. I'm happy to announce to my friend and to this Legislature that the insurers have agreed to just that kind of system of much better disclosure, so the problems that existed there never occur here.

Mr Kormos: You see, Minister, that is not good enough for premium payers across the province of Ontario, who have been hammered away at with higher and increasingly unaffordable and unavailable auto insurance coverage and, similarly, with home and property coverage. This scandal may well have cost Ontarians hundreds of millions, indeed billions, of dollars.

You insist it didn't take place in Ontario. I say that Ontarians across this province are not ready to trust that same insurance company that's been ripping them off over the course of decades and generations in their families. It's not good enough for the people of Ontario.

You see, it's the Financial Services Commission of Ontario that was supposed to regulate and detect these things in the first place. Can we really count on them to blow the whistle when it appears they could well have been asleep at the wheel? Why won't you just refer the matter to a legislative committee so it can examine this matter, determine how big the rip-off is, how many people have been ripped off and for how long by those same big insurance companies?

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend from Niagara Centre couldn't recognize good news if it was brought to him by a page, apparently.

We have had direct discussions with brokers and insurers and they have voluntarily agreed to bring in a new system of disclosure for base commissions and any contingent commissions that may exist. I'll add, to my friend, that directly, right away, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario is going to be working with the

industry to urgently implement these proposals. That is very good news indeed for the average insurance purchaser in this province. I'm very proud that we were able to react so quickly, and I'm very proud of the work my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence has done to bring us thus far.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, your ministry has taken some very positive steps to encourage consumers to save energy. I attended at Hamilton Utilities Corp, where you announced a simplified electricity bill that will help consumers better manage their electricity costs.

Problems understanding a complicated bill have been raised in my riding of Hamilton West and, I'm sure in many of my colleagues' ridings as well. This new initiative is one more example of giving consumers the tools they need to better manage their costs. What are the key features of the new simplified bill, and how will it help consumers?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We have taken action to simplify and standardize electricity bills for low-volume electricity consumers. This represents the majority of Ontario residential and small business electricity users.

The new bill comes in response to customers' stated confusion about the format of previous bills and is a product of testing and extensive work with all parts of the electricity sector. Work on this new bill format involved the Electricity Distributors Association, distributors representing the various billing systems, Ontario Energy Board retailers and, most of all, consumer and business groups.

The new bill format is easier to understand, has fewer line items, uses standardized wording, contains a glossary explaining the terms that are used, offers consumers information that can help them better manage their consumption costs, including conservation tips and historical consumption data, and is the same across the province. There's no cost to the consumer as a result of the change in the regulation.

The complicated bills introduced under the Tories made it difficult for consumers to keep track of their energy use. We are committed to helping consumers by giving them the tools they need to reduce their energy use.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm asking the supplementary on this.

I want to talk about conservation because it's something that comes up in many events I go to. We've been sort of ridiculed about conservation tips, but in fact conservation is common sense. The previous government did basically nothing to encourage consumers to conserve. In fact, they even went so far as to say, "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs. Those efforts may have

made the odd person feel good but they had absolutely no effect." Furthermore, the price cap that we were told was revenue-neutral ended up costing us close to \$1 billion and took away every incentive to conserve. Minister, perhaps members of the previous government should take a moment to notice that we have entered a new era of efficiency and conservation. I would like to know what else we're doing to encourage conservation.

Hon Mr Duncan: We have announced that local distribution companies may begin to invest approximately a quarter of a billion dollars in new conservation initiatives. I think members will start to see the results of this far-sighted McGuinty policy fairly shortly. We have established a conservation action team led by Donna Cansfield, my parliamentary assistant. She deserves enormous credit. We are the first government in the history of this province to put conservation on an equal footing with new supply. We're also providing a plan for installing smart meters in every home and small business by 2010, and have provided the Ontario Energy Board with the authority to establish time-based rates.

The record of the two previous governments: The record of the NDP was to cancel all conservation programs in Ontario. The Tories—Minister Wilson's famous quote was put on the record by my colleague who asked the question. I don't want to go through that painful example again. I want to say this: The way to achieve lower electricity prices is to decrease demand and increase supply. This government is moving to do that.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today I attended a forum to discuss a proposal to manage Fabry disease treatment. I understand you were invited but did not attend. As you know, this is a life-threatening disease, and there are now two enzyme replacement therapies available that will halt the progression of the disease. However, your government refuses to fund these drugs despite the fact that 40 countries, including the United States and Australia, do.

On April 19, when Donna and John Strauss were in this gallery, you gave them your strongest possible assurance for those suffering with the illness that their government is working aggressively with a view to respond to the call that is required. In fact, you went so far as to follow this up on July 3 with a personal, handwritten note to Donna Strauss saying, "I wish to assure you that I will make certain of coverage for Fabry."

What have you personally done to ensure that permanent funding for this life-saving treatment is available for all patients with Fabry disease?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. The issue of Fabry disease is one I've been following closely. I think it's important to note that a process that was established by that party while in government with other provinces, called the

Common Drug Review, is an incredibly important step in terms of this drug. I note the member said this drug can halt the progression of the disease, and of course this is the broadly held view that is there in that community, but heretofore the manufacturer has not made sufficient progress at Common Drug Review. They are in litigation, as I understand it, and I think going further would be inappropriate. But the member asked the question, "What have I done personally?" I'm monitoring this situation very closely, but the manufacturer has some responsibility to work through the Common Drug Review process. That work is ongoing, and I continue to keep myself apprised of this as developments occur.

Mrs Witmer: The minister knows full well that the Common Drug Review process is not and should not be reviewing this therapy. You are sidestepping the issue. I would just remind you that the Quebec minister intervened to provide ERT for a child with Hurler disease. You now have that same opportunity to make that decision and set the standard. You are chair of the federal-provincial health ministers conference. I ask you again: You made a commitment to Donna Strauss four months ago. What have you done other than monitor this?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member notes my new role as a co-chair of the federal-provincial-territorial Ministers of Health. I met with the Ministers of Health two weeks ago in Vancouver, British Columbia, and raised this agenda in informal conversations with my colleague ministers. Only Alberta heretofore has gone forward with a decision to place this product on their formulary. It's a \$300,000-a-year treatment on a per person basis. That's why we do think it's appropriate that the manufacturer make some progress with the Common Drug Review, which is designed to ensure that the precious resources we have are dedicated to the task of providing drugs and benefits that are efficacious.

I say that the issue is one that we're continuing to work toward. But there are other players that have power in terms of how this goes, and it's important that they continue to play that role.

1510

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I'm very concerned. Next week the city of Hamilton will excavate 70,000 tonnes of waste from a toxic landfill site called the Rennie Street landfill, a site that contains PCBs and other old pesticides and things of that nature. People live less than 200 metres from this toxic excavation zone.

Minister, concerns about environmental and health effects of this project have been repeatedly raised to you by local residents, and even Lake Ontario's waterkeepers. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's report, released last week, found that even though your ministry acknowledged that the city of Hamilton had major problems complying with ministerial regulations, you still decided that it was not in the public interest to investigate.

It's outrageous that the shovels hit the ground next week and there are still outstanding questions about this project. How could your ministry in this day and age, with monitoring excavation of highly toxic materials from this dump, say that it's not in the public interest? Where is the thorough assessment that's required? Where are the plans to protect Hamilton workers and citizens and the environment they live in from the very serious harm that will be caused by excavating this toxic site?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Of course, any time that toxic material is handled in this province, the Ministry of the Environment has the responsibility to ensure that the processes that are in place to execute that consider all the issues that are raised by the community. The Ministry of the Environment will not turn away from that responsibility. I can assure you that, as this work is underway, our ministry has conditions that will ensure that the environment for the local community is protected.

Ms Horwath: In fact, the city of Hamilton itself admits that this project is going to put workers at risk. Their own contract documents say that no guarantees could be made regarding the potential for health effects associated with activities on this site. They don't want to be liable for serious toxic effects of excavation work at the Rennie landfill site.

Let me go back to the Environmental Commissioner's investigation. He concluded that the Ministry of the Environment is not prepared to vigorously enforce requirements that flow out of environmental assessment processes. Minister, are you prepared to vigorously enforce requirements at this time? Are you going to protect the citizens of my riding from a potential environmental and health disaster?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky: Again, the Ministry of the Environment takes the activities that are underway in communities across Ontario, that could potentially impact the health, safety and well-being of people in our communities, very seriously. Whenever these kinds of undertakings are underway, there are conditions that must be met, and are monitored by the Ministry of the Environment, to ensure that those folks on the site and people within the community are not put at undue risk. That's exactly what the Ministry of the Environment will follow through on in this particular case.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This past July, my constituents and I were delighted to have you visit our community. You had the opportunity to visit a number of local agencies, including West Ferris day care centre and our Nipissing Early Years Centre, and you met with many front-line workers whose daily efforts make a real difference in the lives of children and youth in the North Bay area.

During your visit, you announced that North Bay will be receiving a portion of the \$24 million that our

government has allocated for children's treatment centres across the province in this year's budget. Minister, could you give the House details regarding the new funding for the children's treatment services in North Bay and area?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question and for her tenacity in representing her constituents in North Bay, particularly children and their families. I'm pleased to say that our government has allocated \$7.4 million in capital funding to build a new facility to house a children's treatment centre in North Bay, a region that badly needs one. The new Northern Shores treatment centre will serve Muskoka, Parry Sound and Nipissing.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Minister. That's very good news indeed for my area.

Over the past 20 years or so, there have been promises about establishing this children's treatment centre, and many headlines, many pictures and many large cheques with Premiers of the day, but never money to build and operate it. I want to thank you for your efforts in making this project finally come to fruition.

Minister, I would like to clarify one issue in particular. There has been some question about the site for this new facility in our area. Has your ministry established where the Northern Shores children's treatment centre will be located in North Bay?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I can confirm to the honourable member that the facility will be built on the site of the future North Bay Regional Health Centre. A letter will be sent very shortly to confirm this and the funding that we are providing. The health of Ontario's children is a key priority of this government and my ministry, and we believe that children's treatment centres provide valuable services to children, youth and their families. We are very proud to be providing \$24 million in capital funding over four years to expand and upgrade the CTCs, and we're working very hard to provide better services for children and youth across the province.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to ask the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday I asked you about your policy that allows applicants for drivers' licences to use their Costco card but not their health card.

Interjection: Just use a library card.

Mr Hudak: Library cards as well.

In response, you said, "This government is not creating any inconvenience for any student getting a driver's licence."

Minister, we took up your challenge. We called your London office, the home of the Minister of Labour. They said that the only other ID that 50% of young people have is a health card—a problem for 50%. Aurora, the home area of your Minister of Finance, characterized this as a frequent problem. In Hamilton, the minister of

children's issues' home area, four out of five young people have this problem.

Minister, you said this wasn't a problem. What are you going to do to fix this issue? Will you admit you've created a problem with the driver's licensing system?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): As I said yesterday, if there are any issues, he should bring them to my attention, which he hasn't. Maybe he did it now.

Let me tell you what the issue with the health card is. For every person who applies for their driver's licence, they have to have two pieces of identification. One is required to prove their date of birth and the other is required to prove their signature. What has happened with the health card is that the Ministry of Health has asked us to stop accepting health cards because of the problem of misuse of the health cards. But we are working very closely with the Minister of Health to resolve some of those issues and we will make sure that drivers' licences don't create hardships for any young people.

Mr Hudak: Minister, this has been your policy for six months. I appreciate your using me as the guardian to tell you when there are problems in the Ministry of Transportation. But if we're seeing four out of five young people who are having problems with this system—in St Catharines and Niagara, in my area, about 12 of these situations a day; in Etobicoke, sending folks away constantly because of this problem—who's asleep at the switch here, Minister? You're running the ministry.

This is an issue of competence of the McGuinty government, and the health bill that you reference was introduced on December 17, 2003, 10 months ago. Minister, you've had 10 months to anticipate this issue, to fix the problem. You've done nothing. What are you going to do to resolve the situation and help young people to get drivers' licences in Ontario?

Hon Mr Takhar: Yesterday, I didn't address the issue that the member talked about: being incompetent and all that. I think his own caucus is calling him incompetent, and he should be very concerned about that.

Let me tell you, the Minister of Health and I are working very closely and we're going to resolve this issue. I'm sure every student has other identification, definitely a library card, that they can produce as evidence of signature.

So I have not heard about it. Maybe he has heard about it. What I said to him was that if he presents to me the evidence, I would be more than pleased to address it.

1520

PETITIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, yesterday in the Legislature, Minister Duncan, the Deputy Premier, stated that the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, had always referred to the 'Ontario health premium as a tax,' even in the 2004 budget lock-up;

"Whereas it has come to light the opposite is true and on May 18, 2004, during the 2004 budget lock-up, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, in fact" was "recorded as actually saying:

"We had the option of looking at personal income tax increases, or going with the Ontario health premium.

"Our choice on the health premium was very clear. We chose it because it gives us an opportunity to identify a revenue stream separate and apart from personal income tax, that will be applied, every single cent of it, to health care."

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the Deputy Premier of the day, Minister Duncan, correct the record."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

It is signed by hundreds of individuals. I'm in accordance, and will sign my name thereto.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to present a petition requesting that crossing control arms be installed on all school buses. I would like to note that in my statement at the beginning, I indicated that crossing arms were \$3,000 per bus. They are, in fact,

\$500 per bus, which strengthens the case to have them installed. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been shown that crossing control arms on school buses reduce or virtually eliminate instances of students being struck by their own bus; and

"Whereas 91% of all front bumper fatalities involve buses not equipped with crossing control arms; and

"Whereas the safety of the children of Ontario is our number one priority;

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to require that all future school buses be equipped with crossing control arms and that all existing school buses be required to be immediately retrofitted with crossing control arms."

There are over 3,000 signatures. Being in full support of this, I am pleased to add my signature.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

Of course, this petition has my full support. It comes to me from my constituents in Woolwich township, in the Waterloo region part of my riding.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget, and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, the government and the province."

I will affix my signature thereon because I agree with the people from Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Flamborough, Dundas, Ancaster, Burlington—people from all over my region who have signed.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I present this petition on behalf of almost 2,000 residents of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and it reads as follows:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget, and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to save the Leslie M. Frost Centre, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre is Ontario's leading natural resources education training and conference centre, aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on eco-

systems and how they can be sustained for future generations; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services in residential care and treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct-disordered, young offenders, or emotionally disturbed; and

"Whereas over 4,000 child and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive therapeutic environment; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services, or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase in several years; and

"Whereas the government has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as per diem funded agencies; and

"Whereas, by excluding those children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of service and costing the government far more by placing these hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario, and include per diem agencies (Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth) in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to a 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed."

It is signed by nearly 1,400 individuals. I'm in agreement and would sign my name thereto.

1530

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the clients of Dr Ron Wagner in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and it's regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by, I'd say, over 1,000 people at least; maybe more.

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately ... commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for vulnerable citizens and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors."

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan—Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan is a fine gentleman who just read a petition earlier.

A petition on behalf of Melanie Perrier: 13,000 of these have been signed in relation to the very tragic loss of her daughter Allyceea Ennis on a school bus.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education requires district school boards to ensure that classes, 'on average for each board, do not exceed ... 24.5 in elementary overall'; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation states, 'For safety and discipline purposes, a school bus is regarded as an extension of the classroom'; and

"Whereas a full-size school bus has 24 seats and can carry up to 72 children, far more than a teacher is allowed to supervise unassisted; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Transportation states, 'Police can charge drivers with careless driving if they do not pay full attention to the driving task'; and

"Whereas school bus drivers, no matter how diligent, cannot adequately supervise up to 72 children and safely navigate a multi-tonne bus through busy traffic and changing road conditions;

"Therefore, all elementary school buses should have a trained adult supervisor on board in addition to the driver."

There are other sections of the petition I will read later, but I'm in support of this petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examination; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care that they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability / Projet de loi 84, Loi prévoyant la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm very pleased to be able to lead off the second reading debate on this bill. I should tell you at the outset that it is really at the heart of the way in which this government is proceeding to transform the management of the finances of this province. It has a very difficult title, Financial Transparency and Accountability Act, but the themes are not only important for government but they are themes that are affecting the way in which every entity, whether a business entity or a voluntary entity, is changing the way they do business.

Might I just note that I am going to be sharing the time allotted for the opening remarks with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

The first point I want to make is that it truly is landmark legislation. There are a couple of things we did in our first year in terms of bills we brought before the House that are going to change, forever and for better, the way in which governments manage their affairs in the province, and this is one of them.

I'm going to get into the details of the bill in a few moments, but I want to point to the five principles that underlie the way in which I, as Minister of Finance, am going about my business and discharging my responsibilities on behalf of the province of Ontario. These are the principles that underlie how we're making our budgets, how we're determining our priorities, how we're making the difficult choices that governments confront, and certainly that Ministers of Finance confront.

The first is that we are bound and determined to get our financial house in order. We inherited a mess. I don't have to devote any time in this speech to the mess we inherited; simply perhaps to note that it was just about a year ago that Erik Peters, the former Provincial Auditor, made his first report on the disastrous state of finances the previous administration was leaving. I only point that out because the Financial Transparency and Accountability Act is in a sense a response to that event and that history.

We're going to get our financial house in order and we took some very difficult steps during our first year in order to do that. Within days of this Legislature returning last November, we brought in a bill that raised significant new measures through changes to the corporate income tax system—not an easy thing to do.

Much more difficult, in the spring budget we announced a new tax called the Ontario health premium. That was even more difficult, because within the context of the election we said we thought we were going to be able to balance Ontario's books without this sort of additional revenue. We were wrong about that. We needed that revenue and we took the very difficult but necessary step of raising this additional money so that we could pay for the health care system we want to create down the road.

We took the steps on the revenue side, and since that time we've been working on the expenditure side. We are determined—I made a speech about this that was widely reported—about the program review we are now launching, which will look at virtually every single expenditure of government and has as its objective the modernization of government so that we can deliver public services, notably in health care and education, but right across the rainbow of public services, more efficiently, more effectively and in a way that is sustainable with the revenues we have. So the first principle is about getting our financial house in order.

1540

The second principle is about greater equity in our tax system. That's one of the reasons why, in the budget, we made a specific provision to help seniors on fixed income with their property taxes, because they represent a constituency in Ontario that was really feeling the pinch. Because of equity, and because equity is an important principle, we said we're going to take a few resources and allocate them to our seniors.

The third principle is that our tax system must remain competitive. In that sense, we're like a private business or a public company that manufactures a product and has to price that product so it's marketable around the community and around the world. Tax systems are sort of like that. People pay attention to the level of taxation in Ontario to make investment decisions as to whether they're going to invest in the province, and thereby create jobs and more economic prosperity. So the principle of a competitive tax system is right at the foundation of the work we do.

The fourth principle is that we need to modernize our system. This notion of modernization and new architecture is important in every aspect of government, and that certainly applies to the tax system and the tax collection system. We put an enormous burden on individuals and companies through our voluntary assessment system. What does that mean? It's simple. It means that we are responsible individually to assess the level of tax we owe our government. So we put a big burden of responsibility on individuals, and we want to make sure that system is as efficient, flexible and responsive to the lives of individual Ontarians and businesses in Ontario as it can possibly be. So the fourth principle is to have a modern system.

The fifth principle, and this gets down to this act, is about transparency in managing this government. I want to say without undue criticism that the previous adminis-

tration got into some very deep trouble when it forgot about the principles of transparency and accountability. The Magna budget was a perfect example of what happens when you forget about transparency and accountability.

If I could just take my friends back to that time, it was a fascinating period, particularly in terms of the pleas from journalists and people who understood the parliamentary system. I think the *Globe and Mail* had some 16 or 17 editorials, one every day, pleading with the then Premier of Ontario, the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, to come to his senses and to present a budget in the Legislature.

Whether presented at Magna or in the Legislature, that budget had its problems with transparency. It had a whole bunch of plugs in it to effectively hide, cover, the deteriorating financing circumstances of this great province. The cover was removed when Erik Peters did his analysis and said, "It's broken. It's not just that there's no surplus. There's a looming deficit," he said, "of \$5.6 billion."

Now that the final financial statements are in for that period—the financial statements for 2003-04—we find that the actual number is \$5.5 billion. That's the burden that we inherit as we try to bring financial stability back to the province of Ontario.

So how does this act, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, help out? Well, in a number of ways. Let me tell you what I think is probably the most important. I think it's the most important because it relates directly to the information that individual voters and the province as a whole will have when they go to vote next time, which is going to be on October 4, 2007. Let me say, parenthetically, how proud I am that we have brought in fixed terms to this parliamentary democracy, this Legislature and this province.

What the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act requires is that a financial statement—a statement of the province's financial circumstances certified or reported on by the Provincial Auditor—be presented publicly to the people of Ontario. That is going to change dramatically the nature of political campaigning in Ontario, because with this act, every political party, every political commentator and every partisan—all of us are going to be working from the same numbers. No more hiding the deficit. No more plugging the problems. The Provincial Auditor will tell the people of Ontario what the financial circumstances of the province are, as we go into an election and a renewal of our democracy. So the starting point for political parties will be the report of the Provincial Auditor required under this bill, which we are asking this Parliament to pass as quickly as possible.

But that's not its only strong element. It also requires reporting regularly to the people of Ontario in an unbiased, uncoloured way. Now, if you're one who looks at the financial pages or even the news pages of daily newspapers, you know that financial reporting, quarterly reports by public companies, is becoming almost an essential element of doing business. It used to be that

companies reported their financial results once a year. Then it was once every six months. Now it's once every quarter. You will be interested to know that the newest theme in the business world is that the quarterly reports of businesses be certified by the auditors of the company that's doing the reporting. It hasn't been a requirement thus far, but that's where the world is going—honest, transparent reporting that represents a very high degree of accountability.

We have a different group of shareholders. There are 12.5 million shareholders in this great enterprise called the province of Ontario. We owe a duty to our shareholders, the 12.5 million people who rely on us for quality public services. We have a duty to them to report honestly, thoroughly and completely what the circumstances of their government are.

One of the things that we're going to be doing is to report to give the people of this province a much longer-term analysis of Ontario's financial circumstances. The Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act will bring about long-term reports about what the issues are confronting the Ontario economy and the government's activities per se. The act will also bring about a requirement that we report, on a regular basis, major changes to our financial circumstances, much like a company that encounters an unexpected activity is required to report.

1550

Now, will it fix everything in the world? Of course not. But I want to wrap up my remarks by saying that this bill, quiet as it is and accountant-oriented as it is, may just have as significant an impact on the way in which we do business, the way in which we represent ourselves, the way in which we conduct our policies and our politics, as anything that we might do over the course of the four years of this Parliament.

It's interesting that the bill itself is rooted in something that went terribly wrong: the last three years of financial administration by the previous government. It went terribly wrong. But if there is a benefit emerging out of that period, one of the benefits is the Financial Transparency and Accountability Act, Bill 84, and I commend it to you, sir, and to the members of this Legislature for speedy passage.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm pleased to follow the Minister of Finance. Just before I start talking about this very important bill, I would like to say that we're talking about fiscal long-range planning and fiscal responsibility, and I think we should note what transpired yesterday in Ottawa. I think the Premier and the Minister of Finance did a very commendable job in terms of reminding the present Prime Minister and the other Premiers that Ontario is more than willing, and always has been—whether it's a Conservative government, an NDP government or a Liberal government—to be very generous to the rest of Canada. That's Ontario's history and legacy, and nobody can question that. But I think the Premier and the Minister of Finance made it quite clear that you can't continue to expect the hard-working people in this province, who put \$23 billion more into

Ottawa's coffers than we get back—essentially, there's just so much we can do. We have our own needs in Ontario.

That's why I was quite interested in some of headlines that talked about "the rich provinces." Sure, Ontario is a so-called rich province, but we have a lot of needs in this province. If you look at northern Ontario, at our First Nations people, at our cities, we have compelling needs that we also have to take care of. Hopefully, the federal government and our other Confederation partners will realize that Ontario will be better able to contribute to the fiscal health of this country by ensuring that it's strong, that we can create wealth, whether it be in the financial sector, in raw materials or in our agricultural sector. As I said, all of our hard-working people in Ontario deserve a bit of consideration. The fact is, we do pay a lot of taxes, we work hard, and we can generate a lot of help for all of the Canadian provinces.

I was glad to see that the Premier and the Minister of Finance were very firm in stating that basic premise, that you can't keep assuming there's an endless flow of money coming from Ontario without any kind of consequence. I was glad that that was noted by the Prime Minister and that we begin to recognize that here in Ontario we have great potential to generate even more wealth for more support for the rest of the country, but we can't do it unless we're able to invest in our infrastructure, whether it be our roads, our water infrastructure, our bridges, and in our ability to attract new investment, new technology innovation, new transformation in health care. As I tell my good friends all the time, who's the biggest employer in Hamilton right now? I think it's the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): The Hamilton Ticats.

Mr Colle: Well, we won't talk about the Ticats right now. The Argos are waiting for them in the woods here.

That is the type of information we have to get to the rest of the country. Just down the street from this Legislature, one of the greatest generators of wealth is on University Avenue: all the teaching hospitals.

If you look at Hamilton, it's the perfect example, what's happening at one of the finest universities in Canada, McMaster, and the health sciences centre out of McMaster, one of the finest in the world. We in Ontario cannot be forgotten by the rest of Canada, assuming things will always be all right in Ontario. We need to reinvest in Hamilton. We need to reinvest in our health sciences research capacity.

You talk to Dr David Naylor. Dr David Naylor is maybe one of the best minds in the economies of health. He will tell you that in the long term, unless there's a recognition that there needs to be massive investment in the health sciences, we're not going to create the breakthroughs in research that we're capable of. I just put that in context to remind us that in Ontario we also have to invest in our basic infrastructure so we can help the rest of Canada. Again, I wanted to give special praise to the Premier and the Minister of Finance for making that point in Ottawa yesterday.

In terms of Bill 84: I always think of it as I'm riding the Eglinton bus, and I was telling my friend from East York and I keep reminding people of this. You know how they talk about middle America. Well, I think Eglinton Avenue is like middle Ontario, because as you go along Eglinton Avenue—you start from Mississauga and you go through Etobicoke, which is a bit tony at times. Then you go into the hard-working municipality of York, you skim across Toronto into North York, then you skim around Laird Avenue with East York and the great people in East York, then you go out to Scarborough and you reach the borders of Durham. But it's a reflection. So if I were going to be on the Eglinton bus and they asked me, "What's this Bill 84 about?", how would I explain it to the people on the Eglinton bus? These are the kinds of questions you get.

I was saying to myself, basically it is an attempt by government to say, "We're going to be very clear with you so that you won't be wondering who or which party or which government agency is supposedly straight with you in the state of the books of Ontario." In other words, what's the shape of our books: How much money do we owe; what's our deficit; what are our needs; our projected revenues? In other words, we have to try and explain to people that here's the state of the Ontario economy and here are the numbers, just like you're balancing your own budget at home when you're trying to find out how much money is coming in and how much money is going out.

As we all know, usually it's the case in all our home budgets that there's a heck of a lot more going out than there is coming in. I think that's been the challenge of Ontario for the previous governments and also our government: There are a lot of demands and needs in Ontario, so there are always going to be more demands on the services. As you know, the biggest driver we have is health care, then education, and we have so many important needs in urban infrastructure.

Therefore, in describing it to my passengers on the Eglinton bus, I would say that this is an attempt to really make the books understandable and clear. And it's not only going to be the government's word or the ministry's word; it's also going to be checked by the independent watchdog, and that's what the Provincial Auditor is.

We had a very capable watchdog here. I worked on public accounts with Erik Peters. He was a man, as much as you may have disagreed with him, whether you're in government or opposition, who was a civil servant with a great deal of integrity, and he really emphasized the fact that he was working for the people of Ontario as the watchdog over the public purse.

So the books are going to be verified by the public watchdog, the Provincial Auditor, and the Provincial Auditor will be able to tell the people of Ontario, six months before an election, the exact state of affairs as far as the province's finances are concerned.

That's in essence what this bill does. It's not just Ernie Eves or Janet Ecker saying there isn't a deficit, or now we've said we've found this \$5-billion or \$6-billion hole. It really takes that type of controversy out of it by having

a provincially appointed watchdog, who is appointed at the pleasure of the Legislature, not the government. That watchdog, the Provincial Auditor, will be able to have a clear, unequivocal statement verifying the accounting of the province of Ontario.

1600

That's what this bill does. It puts in that process so that coming into an election there won't be any questions about the finances, although I should say there will always be questions about the finances. We know that. At least, it's probably going to mitigate some of the wild speculation in terms of the accounting conclusions that we put forward to the public of Ontario before an election.

That's just what this Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, Bill 84, does. I hope I've explained it in a way—it's certainly understandable to me. I think it helps us to ensure that the people of Ontario know we're not just passing laws for the sake of passing laws.

We did have an act on the books called the Balanced Budget Act, which the previous government had—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Which you guys voted for.

Mr Colle: The NDP is saying that we voted for it. Well, I thought the intentions of that act were reasonable, that governments should try and balance their budgets. The only thing we saw wrong with that act was that in practice that there were ways of getting around that piece of legislation, that it wasn't subject to oversight by a watchdog like the Provincial Auditor.

The intention, I think, by the previous government—they were trying to get toward a balanced budget but it didn't have the scrutiny of an independent third party. Our attempt in this legislation is to give power to that third party to verify the government's attempt to disclose the accounting of Ontario's finances. That is the big difference here.

As we know, over the last two or three years there were all kinds of questions about whether the budgets were really balanced. I can remember—I think it was in 1997; I can't even remember the date now—when Highway 407 was sold. The government stood up after the sale of the highway and said, "Well, our books are balanced." But is that the type of methodology you want to use to balance your books? In other words, give an asset that was going to generate who knows how many untold hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars to the Ontario taxpayer that would have been a lot more of a positive flow of money into the Ontario coffers than the quick sale of the highway, and the numbers seemed quite big.

The finance minister at the time, Ernie Eves, said to the people of Ontario, "Well, we're getting," I think it was, "\$3 billion for it," and it sounded like a lot of money. But we know that highway is worth a lot more than \$3 billion, probably—the estimates are anywhere from at least \$5 billion and up.

It's not so much the cost of giving away an asset; it is the revenue generation potential of an asset, especially

when the asset has been given up to a private Spanish consortium for 99 years. I know that the then government called it a 99-year lease. Most people I talked to who are victims of the 407 call it a 99-year fleece.

We're saying that that type of haphazard accounting practice or selling off assets at the last minute to balance the books might be questioned by a Provincial Auditor. A Provincial Auditor would be free to comment on whether the sale of an asset really contributed to the overall fiscal health of the province. If it were Erik Peters, he would certainly comment on that. In fact, he did comment on the sale of assets and the scrutiny that was given and whether or not it was legitimate in terms of long-term financial gains for Ontario.

The Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, Bill 84, is going to try to give people a sense of confidence that is not, as I said, just one Minister of Finance and it's not just one party's word against another party, but it is in essence the word of the Provincial Auditor and his or her staff, who go through every line item to ensure that the books are as they're presented and that they are done according to accepted accounting practices and the Provincial Auditor's accounting practices. As you know, we've had all kinds of nuances about accepted accounting practices when we look at the Enron example etc. But that's why, rather than bring in an outside private auditor, we're saying, "Leave it up to a man or woman of unquestionable integrity" who has the respect, I think, of everybody in this House, and certainly the private sector and the public sector. You have the Provincial Auditor, who will verify the report that will be given.

As you know, this ties in with a fixed election date. The Provincial Auditor will know, because we've already decided we're going to have elections every four years. So six months before the fourth year, this will be tabled in the House and there will be a report by the Provincial Auditor to ensure that there are no questions, no ambiguity for the taxpayers of Ontario.

This is a very positive piece of legislation. It is about the transparent opening of accounts, it's about accountability, and it's something that I would hope the members opposite would support, because I think all of us on both sides of this House would agree with the people of Ontario—they don't want to go through what we went through the last, basically, two years: "Deficit? No deficit? How big was it? You should have known. You didn't know."

We are saying, listen, the facts are that there has been a deficit. Even the leader of the opposition, John Tory, has said that, yes, obviously there was a deficit, and there's no use denying it any more. So we're saying, OK, let's try and make it very clear, very transparent. Put the reports forward by the Provincial Auditor so we don't have a lack of—I was going to use the word "trust," but so that we have some level of comfort for the people of Ontario. The processes are complicated enough for ordinary people who are trying to pay bills, who are trying to make a living and take care of their sick kids, to try and follow what goes on in the accounting practices of this

province. That is really difficult for an ordinary citizen to do, and that's why I think by doing this, we're not saying, "Well, it's up to you to find out what the government is doing." As you know, for a budget of—what is it, almost \$70 billion now? It would take quite an incredible number of accounting firms to do it, and then they would disagree on what the real accounting results or conclusions were.

I would like to wrap up by saying that this is good, progressive legislation. It reinforces that impetus for disclosure, transparency, and better understanding for the taxpayers who, in the long run, have to pay the bill. This is good legislation that should be supported.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability.

This is another one of this government's feeble attempts to cynically send a message to the people of Ontario that they actually care about what's going on. You see, it's a reaction to the fact that the Premier of today, then the opposition leader, Dalton McGuinty, got caught in his own game. He was so fixated on winning the election that he was prepared to say anything to anybody about anything. And now here he is with one of the first pieces of legislation he brings in, the budget, and he breaks all those promises. So now he wants to make sure that he's got something to fall back on and say, "Well, we're breaking these promises, but look at what we're promising to do."

1610

How much value should we be placing in a Liberal promise? Well, I think the people of Ontario have already rendered that verdict. You can place no value in a Liberal promise. Supposing this is passed as law, do you really believe it matters or means anything to the people over across the aisle? If they choose that they don't want to follow their own rules, they will simply break that and bring in new legislation, because this government is convinced that it has some divine right to rule in this province now. So they're not even answerable to the people.

This piece of legislation is just another one of these, "Look, we know they don't believe us. We've got to do something to try to restore some kind of faith in the people in our ability to do the job." As time goes on, I think you will see that the people in the province of Ontario have no faith in this government—indeed, no faith at all.

Mr Hampton: I listened rather carefully to the member's speech, and I just want to make a few historical comments, because I think they're appropriate.

I was a member of the Legislature when the Liberal government before this, at the end of May 1990, presented their budget and said that there would be at least a \$700-million surplus. Then I remember there was an election held on September 6. I was sworn into the cabinet, and we attended our first cabinet meeting about the middle of October. The Ministry of Finance officials

came in and said that the surplus budget that the Liberal government had announced in May and had campaigned on during August and September was, in fact, a \$3-billion deficit at that point in time, only four months later. The finance officials said, "In fact, as we project ahead to the end of the fiscal year, it looks like it's going to be a \$5-billion deficit."

I always find it interesting to get sanctimonious lectures from Liberals about honesty in budget-making. I only want to remark that this government, to a one, voted for the Balanced Budget Act and said that it was great legislation, that it was excellent legislation. I remember the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, during the most recent election campaign, signing the document put forward under the Balanced Budget Act. So I'm quite surprised now at this reversal in position by Liberals.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand and talk about what is a very significant piece of legislation, which is going to be implemented by our government. When my friends across the House talk about a need to restore faith, we do need to restore faith with the people of this province, because the faith in government was broken by the previous government, who deceived with respect to the state of books in this province.

Ontarians cannot accept that, in an election campaign, important decisions that they are making are being made on information that is inaccurate. I hope that we will see the opposition support this important legislation, and I trust, with their new leader, who has said and acknowledged that the state of the books in the province were bad, will support a new area of disclosure.

I'm not sure if everyone speaking today will have read the details of the legislation, so I want to highlight a couple of key provisions. One of those key provisions is that we will require Ontario's fiscal policy to maintain a prudent provincial debt to GDP. That's because we recognize the cost of servicing debt in this province, and that it's a real burden to taxpayers.

Section 4 will require the executive council to plan for a balanced budget. Our government acknowledges the importance of balanced budgets and the importance of not spending taxpayers' dollars paying off interest. As each of our families tries to pay off our debt, so should the province pay off our debt and live within our means. But we acknowledge that you do not balance a budget if the circumstances will require an irresponsible burden on the citizens of this province. We want to make sure that when decisions are made in the future by the people of this province as to what direction they want to take, they will have the straight goods.

This piece of legislation enshrines in law that we will be able to have a pre-election report about Ontario's finances so that on October 4, 2007, Ontarians can make decisions on information they can trust.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I am surprised that neither the speakers nor the interveners talked about our friend Gerry Phillips. You see, Gerry Phillips was the shadow chancellor, if you will, the shadow

Minister of Finance, for 13 years in this province. Gerry, a smart fellow, was a bit too effective in opposition. The Minister of Northern Development has that same problem.

Gerry Phillips warned the estimates committee. He said to the estimates committee—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): In June.

Mr Baird: —in June that there was a potential \$5-billion gap. Now we know why Gerry Phillips didn't make it as finance minister.

I have no doubt in my mind that, had I been the Minister of Finance, I could have balanced the budget. In an extraordinary step, the opposition came forward and gave detailed examples to the government of how they could have balanced the budget. The first thing they shouldn't have done is go on an orgy of new spending. They went and spent three billion bucks in the last six months of the fiscal year. This fiscal challenge that the province was facing was like being told, "If you continue on the road you're travelling, in six months you're going to go over a cliff," and not doing anything about it.

Jim Flaherty had a challenge back in 2001. After September 11, the economic situation in the province was very difficult. He didn't say, "Well, it's the end of September; I'm going to declare defeat and throw in the towel." He rolled up his sleeves and went to work and, with a group of committed caucus members, was able to solve the problem—not like these folks across the aisle.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: I think the speakers in the opposition just proved my point. Basically, they're saying, "He said this; he said that." That's why we need this legislation, so that we have an independent, qualified third party like the Provincial Auditor to set things straight six months before; that he has a report evaluating the financial state of affairs in Ontario. Again, they proved the point, because we can go on forever.

It's funny that you mentioned the Honourable Gerry Phillips, who, everybody knows, is certainly one of the best members who has ever sat in this House. But I remember that when he referred to that, I didn't hear one member over there say, "You're right, Gerry." They all said, "You're wrong, Gerry Phillips. Janet's right; Ernie's right." That's what they said. They said, "Mr Phillips doesn't know what he's talking about." Now, after the fact, they're saying, "Oh, yes, Gerry Phillips was right." But you didn't hear one member of the NDP, you didn't hear one member of the Conservatives, say, "Oh, Gerry Phillips is right. There might be some problem there." No, they said, "Everything is rosy. Everything is balanced." They repeated it over and over again. No one questioned it at that time.

That's why we now have to set the record straight and put it out of the hands of the NDP, the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party and have the Provincial Auditor make an independent evaluation of the financial state of affairs of this province six months before, so we don't have all these stories that have been revised over

the last year of who said what when; that we have the word of the recognized, independent public watchdog, who will tell the people of Ontario six months before, "Here's what the numbers are. Here's what the facts are." That's what this act does, and I hope members of the opposition will support that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Baird: I certainly find Bill 84 very interesting. It's an interesting piece of legislation.

If I could, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead speech and begin a 20-minute rotation, if that would be agreed by the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I thought you had already started your lead speech.

You have asked for unanimous consent to stand down the remainder of your lead speech and start the 20-minute rotation. Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr Baird: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1621 to 1651.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 45.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading, without further debate, to Bill 70 in order to pass the negative-option billing protection.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to deal with this one first.

Mr Baird: Can I speak to it?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Baird: I just would like to indicate the full support of the official opposition to the government House leader's motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent to move second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. Do I have unanimous consent?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

Thank you. The clerks' table and I were just having a little discussion. Unanimous consent was asked for and, just to explain it, it was not given. Therefore, I shouldn't have asked for a voice vote. Unanimous consent was not given. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr Baird: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead speech for the official opposition on Bill 84.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead speech for the official opposition. I do not have unanimous consent.

Further debate?

Mr Baird: I would like to ask for adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1655 to 1725.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 9; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 70 without further debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Further debate.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to adjourn the debate on Bill 84 and begin to debate Bill 70, because it is a very important piece of legislation that we would like to pass.

The Deputy Speaker: Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, they are stopping our plan to try to get rid of negative-option billing. We want to pass this bill. We asked that the government House leader—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I haven't yet recognized you.

Now, further debate. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: We want to debate Bill 70. We asked the government House leader if he would call Bill 70 so we can get rid of negative-option billing, and he said no. He's had a piece of legislation on the order paper since May, and the government House leader doesn't want to call Bill 70. I want to call Bill 70.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like you to rule on whether or not his motion was actually in order, because his own member yesterday voted to adjourn debate on Bill 70. It was Tim Hudak. Would that be—

The Deputy Speaker: All he did was ask for unanimous consent.

Now, order. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: The press who are watching this should know the government House leader will not call Bill 70. He won't call it.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the order we're dealing with is not the order that the member is speaking about, which is contrary to the standing orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, quite frankly, I haven't had an opportunity for him to get into the debate to hear it, so I will hear the member for Nepean-Carleton if we could continue debate, please.

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead time of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Member for Nepean-Carleton.

1730

Mr Baird: We're debating Bill 84 today, and I don't know why the government would see Bill 84 as a priority but not Bill 70, because we want to pass Bill 70. We want to get rid of negative-option billing, but Dwight Duncan, the government House leader, is stopping this bill from being debated today.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): And Jim Watson.

Mr Baird: And Jim Watson. His own government is stopping negative-option billing from being debated in this House. They want to keep negative-option billing as the law in Ontario. We want the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty to join our crusade to get rid of negative-option billing. Our member Tim Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, when he was Minister of Consumer and Business Services, said please try to get this through, but they won't do it. They want to keep negative-option billing. We shouldn't be debating Bill 84.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We'd like to debate the bill that was called so that we can't have the cover-ups that that government did when they were in power. Transparency's important.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Hon Mr Duncan: We're supposed to be debating the order the government called.

The Deputy Speaker: Just take your seat. I will remind members that standing order 23 says that we should debate the subject that's at hand. I would like to hear the member from Nepean-Carleton, so continue, please.

Mr Baird: The Provincial Auditor, under this bill, section 11, will disclose the financial situation of the province. It won't disclose the financial situation of the cable companies and of others of negative-option billing. Dwight Duncan, the government House leader, will not let us pass Bill 70. I beg him.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to bring to the member's attention that, from the Financial Post, January 13, 1995, John Tory was on the board of directors of—

The Deputy Speaker: No, it's not a point of order. Minister, will you please take your seat. Minister, can you hear me?

Hon Mr Watson: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, now you can. Please, thank you for taking your seat. We're just asking for a little co-operation here.

The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I would like to ask for unanimous consent that, notwithstanding anything else on the order paper, at 6:45 when the House comes back, all other business be put aside and that we, the government, call Bill 70 as a bill. We in the official opposition will forgo all of our speaking time—no speakers—and allow a vote immediately on second and third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has asked for unanimous consent—I'll try and paraphrase it a bit—that at 6:45 we debate Bill 70. Is that essentially it?

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would be pleased to support that—members will know it could have been scheduled in any event—provided there's no ringing of the bells on adjournment of the House or adjournment of the motion. I seek that unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: Even before I ask the question, I heard a no, but do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—no, never mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: Thank you for the floor, Speaker. I am pleased to be debating Bill 84, and I noticed on the order paper, where Bill 84 is listed, it has our evening sitting. The government has put Bill 18, Bill 25, Bill 63, Bill 82, Bill 86, Bill 96. They'll put every bill on the order paper except for getting rid of negative-option billing.

I cannot believe why this government is filibustering my friend the member for Ottawa West-Nepean. I have been trying to get Bill 70 passed. I was out late last night with members of his political staff, working on legislative arrangements that would see his bill passed, and I haven't been successful. No success. So instead we're going to debate everything but Bill 70. I want to debate Bill 70. We want to debate Bill 70 in the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird, you may want to debate Bill 70, but I'd like to hear some debate on Bill 84, please.

Mr Baird: Mr Speaker, I move that this bill not be read a second time, but be read a second time six months hence. Can I have a page?

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved that this bill not now be read a second time but be read a second time six months hence. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I'd like to debate this bill in six months because that would give us a lot of time to debate Bill 70. And for the love of God, the member for Ottawa West-Nepean has been here for a year and he hasn't passed a bill. Let's help the member out and let's get this bill passed. I want to debate this in six months. I don't want to debate it right now because I want to pass Bill 70.

The official opposition—I'm joined here by a former Minister of Consumer and Business Services, a two-

timer—two two-timers. They have been Minister of Consumer and Business Services between them four times and they are here in the House to lend their support to Bill 70. But the Liberal government will not call their own bill.

I will tell you what I think it is. I think Dwight Duncan, the member for Windsor, is trying to put up a pre-emptive strike against Jim Watson's leadership campaign. Dalton is going downhill—

Mr Runciman: It's a power struggle.

Mr Baird: It's a power struggle. And this George Bush-like pre-emptive strike against a challenger is just unbelievable. We should be debating Bill 84 in six months and Bill 70 now.

I look at the order paper and they have every single bill that you can imagine, except for Bill 70. I say, if you're over there on Yonge Street at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services—yes, you, Oliver, and you, Derek—help us pass Bill 70. I wonder if I could get the phone number for the government House leader's office. Maybe I could give it out and encourage people to phone. Maybe I could get that. Could you get me the phone number for the government House leader's office?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton, I would appreciate it if you would direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr Baird: Then we could help the Minister of Consumer and Business Services pass this bill, because he needs our help. That's what Nepean politicians do: We help each other out. I'm happy to debate this motion I have to debate this bill in six months, but the negative-option billing should not continue.

We finally today showed the Liberal government for what they are. They can't manage the House and now they can't even call their own bill to pass it. They want this bill to pass. We're saying we won't debate it. Not a single member of the Conservative caucus in official opposition will stand up. We'll give you the bill. Just call it. New Democrats, look at them. He's the only guy here. He can only speak for so long. Let's call the bill and debate it. Let's vote on it. We will sit with the government and watch the New Democrats discuss it. But alas, Dwight Duncan, the Liberal House leader, doesn't want to call Bill 70. He's prepared to do everything to play games to stop—

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Speaker: The member should read the correspondence he received this morning. The government indicated to both the official opposition and the third party that tonight we are calling—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Hon Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I believe it is—Bill 60, Bill 70, Bill 96 and Bill 73. Unfortunately, you didn't even know that.

The Deputy Speaker: With respect, we don't know whether or not we're calling those bills.

Mr Baird: I want to—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird:—speak to my motion to delay this bill for six months. I have here the Orders and Notices paper, for those of you watching up on the third or fourth floor. It says right here on page 2, the orders of the day: Bill 18, Bill 25, Bill 63, Bill 82, Bill 86 and Bill 96. This government hasn't even scheduled Bill 70 to pass. We want to pass it. We don't even want to debate it. We've said, "Here, we've wrapped it up in a big present," but the government House leader doesn't want to debate Bill 70.

The official opposition is shocked and appalled. I want to thank the member for Lanark-Carleton and the member for Leeds-Grenville, the leader of the opposition, for showing up for this important debate. As former ministers, they know how important Bill 70 is, written by Tim Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, as I'm told by the minister.

The Deputy Speaker: No, we're debating Bill 84.

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Mr Baird: I'm doing my motion, my reasoned amendment to debate this in six months. So that's what I am speaking to, my reasoned amendment, which you have read out.

They can call the government House leader's office. If consumers want to help us pass this bill, they can call the government House leader's office at 416-325-7754. And if you want to get rid of negative-option billing, call the government House leader's office and tell them you want to get rid of negative-option billing.

Our campaign to get Bill 70 passed will continue. It's so, so important, and that's what we should be debating, and debating this in six months. But alas, I don't think that there is the support for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. We're prepared to offer our full support, as I've told him on many occasions. We should stand down. I'm sure the NDP would agree to stand down debate and debate Bill 70 tonight. I wish they would put it on the order paper, because they haven't put it on the order paper. I hope we've convinced the government House leader, with the powerful argument that we've made, to call Bill 70 tonight, because we want to get it passed.

We also want to talk about Bill 84. There was a long-standing parliamentary tradition that when you debate a bill, like Bill 84, it is a debate, it is not a speech. So you would have the minister whose name appears on the front of the bill here for the debate. But ministers are busy people. They have a lot of work. The minister here is my friend Monsieur Sorbara. That's the name that appears on the front of this bill. And there is a long-standing tradition that the minister attend the House for a bill. The minister can't be everywhere, but the minister also has a parliamentary assistant, who makes about 10 grand, to show up here in the House and to help the minister with his parliamentary business. It's a practice this government has abandoned. We're here debating Bill 84. We have neither the member whose name is on the front of the bill nor the parliamentary assistant here.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, I shouldn't have to remind you that you don't refer to absences of members, please.

Mr Baird: It's an offence to the traditions of this place. I can remember my whip admonishing me when I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour when I snuck out for five minutes to grab a coffee during the labour debate, because it is important to be there to listen to debates so you can report back to the minister and tell them what you heard and get up in the two-minute to respond to questions. We used to have legal counsel from the Ministry of the Attorney General to give us advice and thoughts. But alas, that's not going to happen. So we do hope the government will call Bill 70 tonight.

I look at the legislation. Look at section 11. This bill says that the government will run its books by the Provincial Auditor before an election is called. Well, what does section 11 of this act say? Let me read it to you: "If the minister does not release information required by this act"—right in their legislation it contemplates that if the minister doesn't release the information required by the act, he shall release a statement explaining why. Well, you can drive a Mack truck through this legislation.

The transparency and responsibility—this is neither transparent nor responsible, because section 11 will allow a Mack truck to be driven through this process. So it is another broken promise by Dalton McGuinty.

I look at other portions of the act: "The minister shall release the statement by laying it before the assembly...." And subsection 11(3): "In accordance with the standing orders of the assembly, the assembly may debate a motion to discuss the statement." "May"? Well, a motion can only be presented by the government House Leader. So if the government wants to hide behind their lack of compliance with the act, the government House leader doesn't even have to call a motion. What a scam this bill is.

I say to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, consumer protection is required for legislators in this bill, because there is no requirement that they even debate a motion on this issue, and the government has to consent. And that's not right. It's not fair. So this Mack truck clause in the bill is going to continue.

The next section of the bill that I like is the Ontario Economic Forecast Council. Is this appointed by the standing committee on public accounts? I'd like to remind all the citizens of Ontario that the Chair of the public accounts committee, Norman W. Sterling, the member for Lanark-Carleton, is with us in the House today for the debate. He is the dean of the House and is the Chair of said committee. You would think this independent, arm's-length council, the Ontario Economic Forecast Council, would be appointed by address of the Legislature or by the public accounts committee. That would make sense. This is the senior member of the legislative branch who works with the Provincial Auditor.

But I read in this bill, subsection 12(3), "The council is composed of persons appointed by the minister...." It doesn't even have to go to cabinet. The minister, with the stroke of a pen, can appoint whomever he or she would like. It's "he" in the case of most Ministers of Finance

and “she” in the case of two Conservative Ministers of Finance; we haven’t had a non-Conservative female Minister of Finance. Bette Stephenson, of course, was the first female Treasurer of the province of Ontario, serving in the Miller government; and then, of course, Madam Ecker, serving as the former Minister of Finance.

So you will excuse those of us in the opposition for questioning legislation when it comes before this House, particularly legislation like Bill 84, where you can drive a Mack truck through it. It’s such a weak, flimsy piece of legislation—fewer than seven pages, and that’s in both official languages—and we see that it has a number of big flaws in it.

We could say, “Well, let’s take it to committee and discuss it.” They’re not going to accept any amendments in committee. They want to get 100% of every bill, and if they don’t get 100% the way they like it, they aren’t happy, and that’s unfortunate. In other Legislatures and Parliaments, you debate these issues and come up with a few compromises with respect to the content of a bill to help get it through, but that’s not the case here.

This government said they ran a positive campaign. This is the first time we’ve seen a government run a negative government. They seek to bully those in the public sector who dare speak up and disagree with them. What about a little transparency in the case of Cyndy DeGiusti? Cyndy DeGiusti is paid for out of funds collected by taxpayers in Ontario, out of the consolidated revenue fund, which Bill 84 seeks to make transparent. I’d like to see some transparency in the Cyndy DeGiusti issue. Why, after six years working at the Hospital for Sick Children, was this woman asked to quit when she showed up for work on Monday? Does anyone know why? No, we don’t know why. Well, we’re going to have an opportunity next week in committee to ask these questions.

The minister has been quite clear: No one from the Ministry of Health or from the Ontario government, nor he, called the Hospital for Sick Children to make an opinion known with respect to a large article, a very good article, written in the Toronto Star on the Saturday preceding Ms DeGiusti’s dismissal. This woman spoke up about the \$45 million in cuts being inflicted on that hospital by this government, by the Minister of Health. She spoke about the terrible consequences it will have for young children, for their families. The chair of the board was contacted by the Toronto Star after the report appeared. They asked, “Did she say anything wrong? She must have left for some egregious mistake she made in the paper.”

“No, no. She didn’t say anything that wasn’t factually correct.” And that, indeed, is unfortunate.

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We’re going to have a chance next week in committee to have some transparency and responsibility, as in Bill 84. We can simply call these folks before the committee and ask them. The committees of course have the power to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony, and we could get their thoughts, advice and suggestions. That’s

what transparency and responsibility are all about, and we look forward to that.

I hope there isn’t a clause in any separation or severance package that requires this woman to keep quiet, because that would be hush money. Maybe we might have to bring in some transparency and accountability. Maybe we had better bring in whistleblower legislation for people who have been victims of bullying by this government in the climate of fear and intimidation that reigns in the health care system in Ontario. That is unfortunate.

Bill 84 will also be debated at great length by our finance critic, Jim Flaherty, who is unfortunately, for other reasons, not able to be with us today. We look forward to raising other concerns in this bill. The Legislature is sitting. It’s about eight minutes to 6. We hope we have some transparency and accountability like that envisaged in Bill 84.

Maybe we could make an amendment to Bill 84 requiring the government to call Bill 70, the negative-option billing bill. Would the NDP support that, the amendment to the bill?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): To this bill? Not to this bill.

Mr Baird: To Bill 84. We could amend Bill 84 and require Bill 70 to be called by the government House leader. Maybe I’ll bring a private member’s bill. We could call it on a Thursday morning sometime and debate Bill 70. It’s the first time I’ve ever seen a government filibuster itself. We’re trying to pass Bill 70. We have said that Conservatives will be so supportive that our only participation in the debate will be to applaud the passage of Bill 70. If any reporters would like to see copies of the e-mails I made directly with the minister in the late hours and early hours of the morning, talking about my support for Bill 70, long before the government tried this new bill, I would be very happy to show them.

We have a problem that it’s not in the order paper. We hope they call Bill 70 because that would do a lot for transparency and accountability, but they won’t. They have not included it in the orders of the day. I have every confidence in the table officers of this House. They take the issues that the government wants to put up.

This is the order paper, Speaker. This is the menu, the legislative menu, and Bill 70 is not on the menu. We will not stop our ringing of the bells until they call Bill 70, because we want to debate consumer protection for the people of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: Our participation will be to vote in favour of the bill. We will stand, one by one, and support consumer protection, support Bill 70, a bill that was written by Tim Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, to protect consumers. I would have thought that would have been a priority for this government. The minister introduced this back in June or back in the spring. I hope my reasoned amendment of putting off discussion of Bill 84 for six months will allow us to get on with consumer protection. Speaker, I want to give you notice today that I

will withdraw my motion of a reasoned amendment to delay the second reading of Bill 84 for six months if we can get on and debate Bill 70.

I want to debate consumer protection. Conservatives are excited to debate consumer protection. We'll see if the New Democrats have any comments on the bill. They always provide a lot of thoughtful debate in this place, and we look forward to that debate and to that discussion. We're tremendously excited.

Interjections.

Mr Baird: The two cacklers over there on the government side of the House know what they say is not true. They know what they say is not true.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm having a very difficult time hearing the member for Nepean-Carleton because the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is not sitting in his seat. He continues to heckle about Bill 70, which we want to call.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a good point of order. Nor is the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke sitting in his. I heard him. I'd ask everyone to take this into account so that we can continue with the debate and hear the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I would, once again, like to ask for unanimous consent that at 6:45, the House consider Bill 70 and vote on second and third reading following the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has asked for unanimous consent. Does the House give unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr Baird: They are frustrating the Conservative efforts to get consumer protection. This bill could be the law of the land before sundown, as opposed to the Bobbsey Twins of despair on the government side, who don't want consumer protection in the province of Ontario. But for those of you who are tuning in—it's just about 6 o'clock—keep watching, because at 6:45, we will be here fighting for consumers and fighting for Bill 70. We look forward to the government calling it.

I hope that the official opposition has embarrassed the government enough into calling Bill 70, because it's not on the order paper, and we would like to see that bill passed. A lot of important measures, particularly in the tourism sector, are in that bill. If they do, we can, certainly, then get on and debate other important issues of the day and other transparency and accountability issues.

That will be something that will be incredibly important to the people of the province of Ontario.

This transparency act is a broken promise by Dalton McGuinty. I dare say—I look at any of the Liberal members—if you go to people, anyone in Ontario on any street corner, and you say, "Does Dalton McGuinty keep his promise," I would bet you a dozen doughnuts that you'll find that 11 out of 12 people will say, "Nope, the man doesn't."

He is known as a promise-breaker. He is known as someone who doesn't keep faith with the commitments that he made to the province of Ontario. He promised a balanced budget. He promised to obey the Taxpayer Protection Act. He signed, on September 11, 2003, the Taxpayer Protection Act pledge, to great fanfare and media. He spent \$4 million advertising that signature, promising to have a referendum. Nothing has changed on the issue of a referendum. It was witnessed by the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. There was nothing that happened after the election which would negate a referendum.

If they're so proud of their new tax—it's not a premium now. That has been thrown out of the window. It's a tax, just like we said it was, even though the Minister of Finance said that he was very clear that they had rejected a tax, that it was, in fact, a premium. That has been proven to be not the case. You have the Minister of Finance saying one thing and the Premier contradicting him—the Premier putting the fear of God in the union movement with his attempts to get those dirty little fingers into collective agreements and opening up the collective agreements of workers right across the province of Ontario. We're going to have to put Dalton McGuinty in the same category as Bob Rae, as a Premier who has done that.

It being 6 o'clock, I look forward to the continued debate on Bill 84 in six months' time, and I look forward to debating Bill 70 tonight. I hope we've embarrassed the Liberals into calling—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, member for Nepean-Carleton; you've drawn my attention to the fact that it is 6 of the clock.

This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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St Paul's			

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Wednesday 27 October 2004

Mercredi 27 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HERITAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When we last discussed Bill 60 in this House, the Conservatives had the floor. We now turn in rotation to the New Democrats or the Liberals.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to Bill 70.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): No.

Mr Duncan: He wasn't in his seat.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry; the government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent in the House?

Mr Bisson: No.

The Acting Speaker: I hear a no.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): That's not the same rule we applied last week.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a point of order, Mr Speaker: For personal safety, I understand that there's been some kind of leakage or something. I have severe allergies and I already have a headache from the strong odour of whatever it is in here—oil, gas; I don't know. Could you please clarify for the members sitting here what's going on and whether or not we're safe.

The Acting Speaker: In response to the member for Toronto-Danforth, we are taking this very seriously. We have security staff who are looking into the matter right now.

I'm aware that there's a very strong odour at that end of the chamber, and we are investigating to try and find out what it is. If there's anything to report, I'll certainly report it to the House.

Further debate on Bill 60. I recognize the member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Yesterday we were talking about Bill 60—

The Acting Speaker: Point of order? I recognize the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I apologize to the member for Lanark-Carleton for interrupting him. I would like to ask for unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any other order of the House, we debate Bill 70 and indicate that the Conservatives would certainly support the bill without speaking to it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has sought unanimous consent to deal with Bill 70. Is there unanimous consent? I hear a no.

I will return to the member for Lanark-Carleton. You have the floor.

Mr Sterling: Yesterday we were talking about amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The amendments to this act were in some ways very similar to Minister Tsubouchi's amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act when we were in government, but there are some noted exceptions.

Yesterday, when I was speaking on this act, I was trying to set the stage for this assembly and for the people of Ontario to be very circumspect with regard to the intent of this government in this bill with regard to property rights. I was recalling what happened with regard to another piece of legislation which this Legislature considered in the springtime. I'm referring to the act which dealt with the Adams mine up north. I said yesterday that while some members here and some members of the public didn't want to see Adams mine go ahead, that was not the real nub of the issue of the Adams mine act. The nub of the issue in the Adams mine act dealt with property rights, and we are dealing with property rights in the Ontario Heritage Act as well.

1850

I indicated to the Legislature that we in Canada are, I believe, in the only country in the western world which doesn't have property rights enshrined in our Constitution. That allows the Legislature of Ontario to basically strip away contractual rights, strip away property rights by passing a piece of legislation here, and the citizen who may be affected by the stripping away of those property rights really has no recourse, save and except to go to the courts.

What happened, of course, in the Adams mine legislation is that not only did they strip away the property

rights of an individual and a corporation but they denied that individual the right to go to court for full compensation, which is more grievous than stripping away somebody's property rights. When you say to somebody, "You can't go to court and seek fair compensation for a right which we have stripped away," you're breaking the rule of law. No Legislature, no Parliament should ever cross the line and strip away the rule of law.

But basically what this government did—and people haven't really talked about it, which bothers me very, very much—in the Adams mine case was, they said to the developer, "We're taking your property rights away and we're only going to allow you to go to court to get certain compensation." So what they did retrospectively was, they went back and said, "We're changing the rules, which you have followed for the last 10, 12 years, with regard to our Environmental Assessment Act and those kinds of things."

You see, what happened was that the developer went through a process 10 years, 12 years long. He went through all the legal process, got the proper certificates in order for him and his company to go ahead and do it, and this government said, "We're going to treat you differently from every other citizen in the province of Ontario. We're going to strip your rights away."

They singled out an individual and they did it on the worst possible basis. They did it on the basis of political advantage, because one of their members promised his constituents that this wasn't going to go ahead. So on the basis of a political whim they said to one of us, "We're going to strip your property rights away from you and we're not going to allow you to get fair compensation, which you're entitled to under the laws of Ontario and the laws of Canada."

There were a few editorials. There was an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* talking about our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. They thought he was a lawyer who understood what the rule of law meant, and that he and the Attorney General would stand in this place—and particularly, the Attorney General—and say, "I am going to protect the rule of law and ensure that each and every citizen is dealt with fairly and equally."

Now, how this ties into the Ontario Heritage Act is that there are sections within this act which allow a municipality to designate properties as heritage properties and thereby restrict an owner from utilizing that particular property for his purposes. They say to the owner, "You cannot use this property as you wish, but for the good of all we're going to take your property rights away from you."

I guess one of the most disturbing parts of this Ontario Heritage Act is that the Ontario government, for its own purposes, says that the Expropriation Act doesn't apply if the Ontario government designates a historical property for its purposes. What that means is that a person, under the Expropriation Act, is allowed certain rights for compensation. They're entitled to certain hearings and to certain costs under the Expropriation Act to ensure that someone who hasn't got a lot of money, and their prop-

erty is designated, can get costs for representation before the courts to ensure he or she gets proper compensation from the Ontario government.

Again we see this government looking toward property rights with a lot of disdain. Somehow they don't think that if the provincial government designates a particular property and says, "For the good of all of us, we want to designate this property and restrict the owner as to how he or she uses that property. We don't want to give that owner a fair shake. We don't want to compensate him or her for the fact that we are going to say to all of Ontario, 'You can enjoy this property, the facade of the building, whatever other parts of the building that are included in the designation,' but we won't allow proper compensation. We don't want to allow you help to go to the courts under the Expropriation Act to gain proper compensation for the right we have taken away"—and for me, this is very troubling, particularly troubling, not for developers or landowners who own very big and expensive properties, but for the common person who wouldn't have the necessary finances to go to court and hire a lawyer, hire the experts to appraise the property and protect their interests.

The other interesting part of the Ontario Heritage Act is that we heard during the campaign that this government wanted to restrict, wanted to pull back the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. They said to the Ontario Municipal Board, "We're going to clip your wings. We're going to restrict what the Ontario Municipal Board can do with regard to appeals against a municipal decision."

Under this legislation, they do the exact opposite. Under this legislation, they say to the individual, "The municipality comes in and they designate your property as heritage property. Who do you go to to appeal that designation? You go to the Ontario Municipal Board." I thought what was going to happen, vis-à-vis what these people promised in their election, was they were going to lessen the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. In fact, what this legislation does is enhance the power of the Ontario Municipal Board. It makes their jurisdiction larger, and so they're going to be involved in more things, including the right to say to a municipality, "You can"—or cannot—"designate this property as heritage property."

This government's total lack of concern for property rights, their lack of concern in following the basic tenets of our justice system, which has been developed over the last 1,000 years, makes me very angry, and on that basis, I move to adjourn the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1900 to 1930.

The Acting Speaker: Will the members please take their seats.

Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing. You may take your seats.

All opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the Clerk. You may take your seats.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon Mr Duncan: There is a noticeable odour in the chamber—and I want to take this seriously—that is

causing some members to express concern around health and safety. I think that's an important concern. I believe we should adjourn the House for the evening until staff from the Ministry of Labour can determine what the cause of it is. I seek unanimous consent to do that.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to move a motion to adjourn the House? Agreed.

Government House leader, move the motion.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the House be now adjourned until regular business tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

The House adjourned at 1932.

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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Thursday 28 October 2004

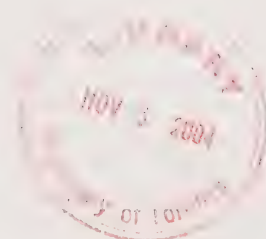
Jeudi 28 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 octobre 2004

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LAND ACQUISITION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a permanent land acquisition program with long-term funding in order to ensure the continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive areas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Chudleigh, you have 10 minutes for your remarks.

Mr Chudleigh: Today I have tabled a motion calling on this Legislature to support a government initiative to create a program to extend permanent funding for environmentally sensitive land and land purchases in Ontario. I'm calling on MPPs of every political stripe to support this motion, to reach out to the future and help assure that environmentally sensitive and significant lands are purchased for public use by generations of Ontarians yet unborn. Our service to Ontarians will be judged by the legacy we leave them. Let us leave them a commitment to environmental protection. Let us leave them public access to Ontario's finest and most beautiful open spaces.

Jean Williams, chair of Conservation Halton, one of seven conservation authorities that manage 70% of the parks along the Niagara Escarpment, agrees. She says, "It will be difficult, if not impossible, to acquire new properties without the help of the province. Conservation Halton strongly supports Mr Chudleigh's motion that a land acquisition program be introduced to ensure that these sensitive lands can be purchased to fulfill the objectives of the Niagara Escarpment plan."

In the last several years, there has been a patchwork of programs used to finance purchases of environmentally significant lands. These programs include the natural areas protection program, the Ontario parks legacy program, the community conservancy program and the eastern habitat joint venture program.

The natural areas protection program focused on acquiring significant natural areas on the Niagara Escarpment, the Rouge Valley and the Lynde Marsh. The Ontario parks legacy and the community conservation programs focused on the acquisition of key properties to

help fill gaps in parks and the protected areas system. The eastern habitat joint venture program focused on the acquisition and stewardship of important wetlands required to maintain wildlife habitat.

The current ecological land acquisition program was conceived as an enhancement to existing land acquisition programs in keeping with the goals of Ontario's Living Legacy, a comprehensive natural heritage program announced in November 2000. Ontario's Living Legacy was announced by then-Premier Mike Harris in November 2000. It is the most comprehensive natural heritage program in Ontario's history. It was the largest expansion of Ontario's parklands in Ontario's history. It added 378 new parks and protected areas, with a total of five million acres, or 12% of the planning area.

In 1991, the Ministers of Natural Resources and parks and protected areas in Canada met and agreed that by the year 2000 they would try to preserve 12% of the natural areas of Canada in order to preserve those lands for future generations. By November 2000, Ontario was the only province in Canada which attained the goal of preserving 12% of the planning area for future generations.

The Ontario Living Legacy includes enhancement, protection, conservation and recovery efforts for species at risk in Ontario. It includes more funding for youth programs and resource stewardship jobs for young people. There were enhancements to fish and wildlife protection and there was a huge increase in provincial park acreage, sites and plans, such as the ecological land acquisition program, to acquire more natural areas that are currently under private ownership. The Ontario Living Legacy had a price tag of over \$100 million. The ecological land acquisition program obtained another 17,000 acres in order to fill in gaps in the conservation areas and provincial parks. Over its two-year mandate, it spent \$10 million in order to do that.

We should have a great concern that without any formal announcements, ELAP has been extended from its expected end date of March 31, 2004, only to cover current projects underway in the Rouge River Valley and the Lynde Marsh. ELAP allowed the province to address the acquisition of privately held lands in areas of Ontario not covered by the Ministry of Natural Resources land acquisition program. With that program coming to an end, it is time to address the issue and have the Legislature express its desire to have a permanent program in place.

1010

After all, 100 years from now, or maybe 10 or 20 years from now, I don't believe we as a Legislature will

be judged by the issues that are before this House today. Indeed, we won't be judged by the issues that were before the House during our government or during the NDP government as well. This isn't a political issue. I believe we will be judged on how we treated and protected the environment for future generations. As we look at the world biosphere areas, our stewardship will be judged by future generations. Many of the world biosphere areas, such as the Everglades, the California coast, the Adirondacks in New York state and even the Serengeti, are biosphere reserves, as are the Niagara Escarpment and Turkey Point, under the UN biosphere conservancy program. Almost all of those areas are involved in a recovery project. They are trying to recover what was once there.

We in Ontario have an opportunity. We have an opportunity to skip the degradation phase and put in place protection of our natural areas today that will preserve those areas for future generations in their natural state. We won't have to come up with a recovery program 10, 15, 30 or 100 years from today; those areas that are most special to Ontarians will be preserved as they are today, in their most special conditions.

The only way to do this is to purchase these lands and put them in public ownership. It can't be done in one year, it can't be done in five years; it has to be done over a long period of time, when you slowly purchase these lands as they become available. In so doing, we will hold them in public hands and they will be protected forever under public ownership.

Zoning public lands, although it's a good first step, has a habit of eroding away. As time goes by, zoning can change. Zoning is in the hands of too many people who may not have the big picture in mind. So zoning land for public protection does not always accomplish those goals. Most of a large belt through Halton was zoned at one time to protect that area. It was zoned back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and most of that zoning area today has been eroded away. It's under development. It's being held by speculators. Most zoning of those lands has changed, and it has been eroded away so it no longer has the protection that it would have if it was under public ownership.

It's very important that if we're going to be serious about protecting our environment, protecting our most precious natural lands, it has to be done only under public ownership. Zoning is a stop-gap, but it's not the end of the story. You can't expect to protect those lands for future generations if zoning is the only protection you're applying.

The goal of ELAP was to enhance public ownership and stewardship of natural areas across Ontario where acquisition priorities had been previously established. They can be established within the context of approved provincial lands, such as the Niagara Escarpment, or within approved acquisition strategies such as the Lynde Marsh or under an acquisition agreement such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada's eastern habitat venture in order to protect wildlife and sensitive lands.

The government of Ontario needs to demonstrate a commitment to public ownership of these lands by making these purchases through partner organizations. We can ensure the land is managed properly, acquisition plans are in place for future purchases and the roles and responsibilities of those involved are clearly spelled out. While this program needs to be made permanent, I fully expect it should be reviewed at various intervals on several levels, including funding, partnership arrangements and property acquisition plans and priorities.

This motion is not binding on the government. However, if it is passed by us today in this Ontario Legislature, it is a powerful suggestion that legislation should be forthcoming to deal with the expressed wishes of the people of Ontario. It begins here today with all of us. It is time to vocally support environmental protection in Ontario. Please lend your support to this motion. Your commitment to keep this issue in front of the government will be appreciated by generations to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's truly my pleasure to speak to this motion on behalf of the NDP caucus here at Queen's Park. As you would imagine, we have a great deal of sympathy for this particular motion. We believe that now, although there are some tools in place, they certainly are not enough to achieve the kind of goal that Mr Chudleigh has set out.

Quite frankly, we do have expropriation powers, as you know, in this province, and sections of acts such as the Ontario Water Resources Act have provisions for land securement. We have agencies, like our conservation authorities, which have already been mentioned by the mover, which are funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The Ontario Heritage Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, owns and manages land for natural heritage purposes. It also holds lands in trust, including parts of the Bruce Trail and other areas that are habitats of endangered species, sensitive features of the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment.

But we all know that there are missing pieces. The missing piece being addressed by this particular motion is that there is no dedicated funding source for land securement in the province. The Living Legacy land trust that was established by the previous government is a fund that allocated some monies toward the acquisition of protected lands, and that fund is now finished.

So in general, there is support from us with regard to this motion. There is certainly currency for this particular initiative among people of Ontario. We know that many polls have been conducted and many pieces of research have been done around the opinions and concerns of people in Ontario in regard to environmental issues, particularly in regard to the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas and the protection of these lands. A poll conducted by Environics found that Canadians are supportive of public funds being used to acquire more parks; that was done in 2001. That same poll found that 80% of Canadians said they would be willing to add \$1 a month to their municipal taxes to support natural park spaces in and around their communities.

I know from my perspective, having worked in the city of Hamilton on municipal council for the last seven years or so, that certainly rang true in our community. People really were quite supportive of parkland, of beautification, of keeping green spaces and not only active parks, but passive parks, places where people could enjoy the beauties of nature, with the understanding that these were assets that would carry us through future generations and weren't just a matter of the present, but a matter of the future.

There are some things that are missing, and those are pieces around the ongoing viable government support in terms of funding for these kinds of projects. Again, it's indicated that people are prepared to dedicate some public funding to these kinds of projects, but the reality is we need to make sure the mechanisms are in place for that funding to be gathered and dedicated.

The public willingness that is there for that funding kind of stands in contrast to what governments have been able to achieve so far, and really the amount of dedication to these kinds of funds has been in fact shrinking over the past decades, which is out of whack with where the public wants to go. So the role of securing environmentally sensitive land on a consistent basis has fallen on the shoulders of underfunded conservation authorities and a select few land trusts across the province that are founded by the provincial government via one-time funding. That's simply not good enough.

1020

The Living Legacy trust established under the Tories, which included some funds for lands securement, was finished this year, as I've already mentioned, so private foundations, universities and citizens' groups, all of those kinds of people, have been trying to fill the gaps that exist currently in our efforts as a collective group of people to deal with these issues. In the end, the goals of meeting conservation targets and trying to find a strategy to restore and preserve and safeguard a healthy amount or reserve of these kinds of lands cannot be left to this patchwork system. It cannot be left to fall on the shoulders of volunteers, citizens' groups and private foundations. It's really the elected representatives in government who need to step up to the plate and take responsibility for the stewardship of these areas.

The budget tabled here by the Liberals in 2004 contains a few measures geared toward land securement. There's a small commitment to the minor expansion of conservation land through the property tax rebate program. There are unspecified portions for environmental land acquisition from about an \$89-million fund falling under the heading "environmental capital spending," but we know that the risk here is that funds for improvements to natural resources, management infrastructure, environmental cleanup projects, the upgrading of conservation authority dams and other kinds of projects will all be drawing from the same fund, so the maintenance and management of existing parcels and existing resources in this area will be drawing on that fund. With coming cuts in the next couple of years, with

cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, or the inability of those ministries to get even regular annual increases for the normal business that takes place in regard to increasing costs, what we're going to see is these two ministries that are most involved in environmental stewardship not being able to keep up, and certainly not being able to do anything new in regard to the environmentally sensitive areas.

So, although it would be in the best interests of everyone to introduce an initiative to meet the pledge toward biodiversity and water source protection, it's certainly not the government that's doing that; it is Mr Chudleigh. Again, I'm very supportive of that initiative.

In concert with funds, though, there needs to be that political will to protect the lands being put into place, and really the government has it already in its mandate, but what they've done, unfortunately, is succumb to the pressures. The mover of the motion indicated quite clearly that those pressures exist. I think he referred specifically to the pressures around land zoning and those kinds of issues that occur at the municipal level. Those are the kinds of things that erode the commitments to protecting these lands. So even the government, as we see it now, has backed off on some commitments, particularly around the Oak Ridges moraine and Castle Glen. The Liberals broke their promises to stop the construction on the moraine in November, claiming that the expenses would be too high. But the legal opinions prepared by the Canadian Environmental Defence Fund found that the new government could have expropriated moraine land and would have only been responsible for paying out-of-pocket expenses, according to the expropriation statutes. But there was no such action taken, and neither was such action taken to stop Castle Glen, which will be the first urban area to be developed on the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO biosphere, again, as mentioned by the mover of this motion.

These are the kinds of concerns that exist and the kinds of initiatives that are missed. These are the kinds of opportunities missed by government unless there's a real strong commitment to protecting these lands. Again, pressures of interest groups and developers oftentimes get the ear of governments, and we need to find ways to make sure that these lands are purchased and protected for time immemorial. We were really hoping that maybe the greenbelt legislation could deal with some of these issues, but we'll have to see what happens as this initiative unfolds.

What we really need to see is a real, serious dedication of resources. We need to see provincial governments dedicating selected revenue sources. It's similar to things like the health tax. If we're going to be making commitments around these areas, we need to make sure that we identify sources of revenue that we can then flag and identify to be put into these funds so they don't go into general revenue, that these particular sources of revenue that the provincial government obtains then immediately get put into this fund, so that they're able to fund the purchase of these lands.

For example, one of those types of revenue sources could in fact be water-taking fees. That seems to be fairly logical. You have water-taking fees, you bring those fees in for the water that's being removed from some of our natural areas and then you put those fees into a dedicated fund. As that fund builds, it's used to purchase these lands. We know that conservation authorities are front and centre in helping to protect watersheds and ecosystems and to try to sustain them, and they express the funding shortfall that they are constantly dealing with to meet the goals of protecting and conserving environmentally significant areas.

Many times, in the community that I come from, there has been quite a bit of controversy around the conservation authorities' lack of funding and their lack of ability to continue to do the great job they do, without then turning around and increasing the fees on the users of their green spaces and the users of the natural areas that they are protecting. Oftentimes, there's a struggle between wanting to do the right thing, wanting to maintain a great level of service and of stewardship that they do, and the growing pressure of financially being able to keep that work going. Conservation authorities will be instrumental in the implementation of any pending source water protection plans, and the securement of watershed areas could be part of protecting water at the source.

There's no word yet on how to fund source water protection, and they could face the same fate as the majority of Great Lakes remediation plans, which are great on paper and look wonderful in terms of plans, but the problem becomes that the resources aren't available to put those plans into play. Source water protection should also integrate all the Great Lakes protection plans. In fact, there have been proposals by Ms Churley, from my caucus, that funds from water-taking fees be directed specifically to source protection plans and the bodies responsible for implementing them from source to tap. For example, conservation authorities and municipalities allocating these kinds of funds for specific purposes means long-term sustainable funding for source water protection.

There are a couple of other specific details around what kinds of opportunities exist to take dedicated fees and funnel them into a fund, particularly for these kinds of initiatives. However, we come to a bottom line in terms of an effective strategy, and what we really need to recognize is that there has to be a larger piece to the puzzle. Having a will is excellent; having a debate about the necessity for this kind of initiative is essential. However, not designating funding for securing environmentally sensitive lands is not good enough. It can't be left alone; the strategy can't be left alone unless we actually start to designate where these funds are coming from.

We have seen under the previous government that certain areas had been protected, but then the rest were left open for activities that damaged the watersheds and tributaries, and the impact was significant. In fact, it weakened the environmental systems, and the environmental review processes over that time period were also

eroded. We need to consider the environmental implications of the development of various projects that are coming forward, various resource activities we are undertaking, and subsequent to that we need to have plans to mitigate. We need to be centralized in the planning process in regard to these lands. It can't be just a matter of goodwill. We have to take a really serious and complex look at the picture. It can't be a piecemeal review of the situation. It can't be a matter of talking the talk; it has to be a matter of walking the walk. That walk has to include not only the teeth in various pieces of legislation to realize that goal, but also it needs the commitment to identifying the dedicated funds that can then be funnelled into a trust that can be used to obtain, for the future of our children and grandchildren, land acquisitions that are going to keep our communities healthy and whole and celebrate our diversity and biology in a very full and appropriate way.

1030

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm very pleased to be debating this particular issue and I thank the member for Halton for bringing it to the attention of the House this morning. Essentially, what my friend is asking for is that the government of Ontario establish a permanent land acquisition program with long-term funding in order to ensure the continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive areas.

As the member would know, since 1985 we have had quite a number of land acquisition programs from the government of Ontario. We've had formal acquisition programs that work in conjunction with public and private conservation partners for the purchase of environmentally sensitive land since 1985, including the Niagara Escarpment land acquisition and stewardship program, which worked from 1985 to 1998; the eastern habitat joint venture, from 1986, and it's ongoing; the Ontario parks legacy program, 1996, and it's ongoing; the natural areas protection program, which operated from 1998 to 2002; and presently, the ecological land acquisition program, which has been operating since 2002.

In this given year, we'll be expending about \$8.9 million. One of the things that's important about that is to understand that it works with partnerships. We have in Ontario, and with the Ministry of Natural Resources, approximately 20 partners who work with the government to acquire properties that are ecologically sensitive, natural heritage sites that are important to the people of Ontario and obviously to the government, and there are many organizations that participate in that. I think this year we'll leverage 16 million to 18 million additional dollars, or somewhere in that neighbourhood, acquiring a considerable amount of land that will be useful to the public.

I think Mr Chudleigh, in asking for a permanent fund, needs to also recognize—and I think he would agree with me—that there need to be provincial priorities established for how it's spent. As the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I come from a constituency that's the size of all of southern Ontario and it is probably 85% owned by

the Queen. It is crown land; it is parkland. As a matter of fact, and I know, again, my friend from Halton knows this very well—it's the coastline that I represent, proudly known as the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. Think about this: 43% of the Great Lakes Heritage Coast—the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka is here and he represents a good, proud portion of that coast. I do, and my friends from Thunder Bay-Superior North and Thunder Bay-Atikokan represent the remainder. There are really only four of us who represent 4,000 or 5,000 kilometres of coast. What's interesting about that coast is that 43% of it is in park today, either a federal park or a provincial park. It might actually be a higher percentage. Another 20% of that is crown land. So we're talking about the coastline of Lake Superior and northern Lake Huron that is more than two thirds in the hands of the public today. Yet, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, I know there are areas of private land that need to be acquired.

I am particularly pleased that the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which has done a wonderful job across all of Ontario, is pursuing some projects in the Michael's Bay area on the south shore of Manitoulin at the moment. Clearly, I want to wish them the best in that effort. The Blue Jay Creek is there, and many people will know that as one of the sites of one of the province's fish hatcheries, an important part of our natural heritage. Some great work has been done, by both the agricultural community and others, in making sure that this particular resource to the people of Ontario is protected well, and is being looked at for more public participation or ownership. That's a good thing. We had a lumber company, a timber company, that actually donated land in that area over a decade ago.

It's important, and what the member is talking about is important. I want to point out that, of course, it's ongoing. The government has quite a number of initiatives that go beyond this point of just purchasing land. As a northerner, but born and raised in southern Ontario, somebody who was just a couple of weeks ago in Port Franks at a meeting of a group that's studying and promoting the values of the Carolinian forests, to come down into this huge clear-cut we call southern Ontario and to look at bringing some of its parks and protected spaces and public spaces into the same kind of category of public ownership that we have on our coasts and in our protected areas—not that we couldn't do more; I am not suggesting that. But, frankly, the south has been quite the laggard on this, as the northerners look at it. We just want to encourage Mr Chudleigh to work with the community partnerships that he knows are out there. I talked about the Nature Conservancy, but there are many local groups that would like to protect, enhance, purchase and acquire land that could maybe go to a conservation authority or possibly be included in a provincial park. There are all kind of options. Certainly, we also want to encourage those kinds of partnerships.

Mr Chudleigh, I want to thank you for bringing this forward. I think there might be, as an individual member speaking here, some opportunities to find a way to

encourage the public to donate into an acquisition fund that was permanent and ongoing.

I guess my time is just about expired. I just want to indicate to the member that I am happy to be supporting his resolution today.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Further to the concept of conservation incentives and the land acquisition discussed by the member from Halton, the finance committee received a submission regarding the benefits of reinstating the community conservation lands category. This is part of the conservation land tax incentive program. This came from Michael Bradstreet. He's the Ontario director of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the NCC. Bradstreet lauded these tax break programs as low-cost tools to encourage landowners and land trusts like the NCC to protect and steward important habitats within the province of Ontario.

This approach, the NCC approach, MPP Chudleigh's approach and the ALUS approach—the farmer-driven alternate land use services concept—I feel is far superior to the approach that we will hear this afternoon from the McGuinty government with the introduction of the greenbelt legislation, legislation that in my view essentially trashes property rights and seizes the value of private land without compensation.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada, through partnership, has a different approach. They've been able to protect 70,000 acres of ecologically sensitive land in the province of Ontario. They own 35,000 acres.

1040

There is another approach as well, further to the issue of greenbelt legislation that we know will perhaps do nothing more than promote the leapfrogging of urban sprawl over the designated greenbelt areas. This is an approach proposed by Earthroots and what's referred to as the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance asking Premier McGuinty and all parties to embrace the NOAH concept. This is a comprehensive conservation biology plan to link the Niagara Escarpment to the Oak Ridges moraine, and to go further to link it with Algonquin Park and to go south to the Adirondack State Park. This heritage system plan would be somewhat similar to the Yellowstone to Yukon, the Y2Y corridor in the Pacific northwest, and it reminds me of the panther preserve, a very large area identified in Florida.

So I will wrap up. I fully support the Nature Conservancy of Canada. They presented to the finance committee a section titled Untaxing Nature, where they proposed the reinstatement of the community conservation lands category of the CLTIP program.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's my pleasure to be able to stand in support of the member from Halton's motion. I think I'd like to take it from a slightly different perspective than what others have proposed, and that is actually from the perspective of how we're dealing with our population growth.

Some 80% of Ontario's population is actually in the urban band around the Great Lakes and, of that, about 40% or half is in the Golden Horseshoe as we know it.

We have the highest population growth in Canada, and we're actually going to go from 4.2 million to 5.4 million or 5.6 million by the year 2016. So what possible difference could that have to do with the issue of land acquisition for parks? It really comes down to the issue of how we deal with our greenhouse gas emissions.

Our environmental impact from even thermal space heating is significant in the residential sector, and we're going to increase that sector significantly in the next number of years. Just from the residential sector, excluding the use of electricity, we have 14.1 megatons of greenhouse gas emissions that occur from space heating alone, 4.4 megatons from water heating in the residential area, 10.9 megatons from space heating, 1.2 megatons from water heating, and 0.4 megatons from space heating or cooling in our residential buildings. When you consider there are 4.4 million dwellings in Ontario now and our growth is approximately 85,000 houses a year, the majority of which grow in those huge areas, suddenly you look at the issue of environmentally sensitive areas in a different light, from my perspective.

It's wonderful to say that 43% of our parks are in northern Ontario, and kudos to that, but the fact of the matter is, we need to look at our sensitive lands environmentally in southern Ontario as well. The greenbelt legislation will, in fact, deal with some of that, but I think that people also have to recognize that a park can be anything from what they call a parkette, which is a small piece of land, to hundreds and hundreds of acres, all of which can have a significant impact if you do something like plant a tree or two.

Toronto used to be called the city of trees and, until recently, when they put in the legislation municipally that forbid the taking down of trees unless there was a reason—and, typically, the reason was the tree was unhealthy—we would hear stories of developers going in and virtually just tearing down. If I had an opportunity, I would say “build a house, plant a tree” would be a mandatory requirement—but not a little tree; a tree that would be sufficient to make a difference in that environment and that community.

That's one of the things that we look at that we haven't given a lot of emphasis to, and this is why Mr Chudleigh's motion is important, because he looks at acquisition in sensitive areas so you can have ANSIs, they call them, areas of natural and scientific interest. They can be abutting a farm, they can be down at the bottom of a lakefront, they can be in any number of areas, but once that area has been identified, unless it falls under the forest tax rebate system or whatever, how do you protect that? One of the ways you can do it is by working in partnership.

Certainly, this motion doesn't say how it will be done, but that it should be done. I think “should” is an optimal word. It doesn't say it should be done without this or that. I know Mr Chudleigh is a very fiscally responsible person. He recognizes that it has to be done in such a manner. If you don't have the money with which to do it, you can still do the planning, the thinking or the inves-

tigating. All the motion says is that we should be open to all of those thoughts, investigating and thinking beyond what's traditionally been in place, and are there other opportunities?

For me, I look at my own area down at the lakeshore in Etobicoke, because I'm the member from Etobicoke Centre, and you have to look at the development that has occurred in that area and what they're doing in terms of landfill to produce parks because, in fact, we've taken away the land to put into development. There are a number of habitats for birds and species of plants and such that need to be protected, and certainly you can do that through land acquisition.

The containing of urban sprawl and the management of growth is something that we put into our permanent sustainable legacy through the greenbelt legislation that's being proposed. One of the things it happens to do is actually put the public interest first. I believe that's really what Mr Chudleigh's motion is all about. He is saying that we need to look to the future in order to sustain the land; that is, actually looking at it in the context of its economy, its environment and its society. That's the whole concept to sustainability. That's something we need to really incorporate into all of our thinking. It shouldn't be just programmed into environmental thinking or energy thinking. It should be in all of our thinking as we plan policies, practices and procedures in this Legislature around the legacy we all wish to leave for the Ontarians we serve. Certainly, the Ontarians we serve are our children because they in fact, as I've said many times, are our future.

What you're doing through a motion such as this is protecting the broader provincial interest, obviously, through policy, but I believe you're also protecting the broader public interest through good planning. Good planning is part of what the leadership of a government should be doing when they look at the issue of land acquisition of parks, parkettes and areas of natural and scientific interest, and balancing that through the issue of the economy and growth.

I'm not sure that I particularly like the words “urban sprawl.” The connotation makes it sound like it's unacceptable or it's the wrong thing to do. In fact, you need someplace for people to live. We're fortunate enough to live in a province that is virtually the size of western Europe, and yet we know that 80% of our growth is going to occur along our Great Lakes. So if we know that, then it really is incumbent upon us to plan, and plan well. One of the things you do in planning is look at the use of that land. Some of it will go to development, but some of it must be able to sustain that development, and sustaining that development means dealing with things such as greenhouse gas emissions and living with your environment in a friendly, acceptable way that sustains and protects the environment for the future and, in fact, lives in some harmony with that environment. Maybe that's something we haven't done for a long time.

In my particular file, it's energy. We are energy hogs. I think it's time for us to look at how to do business

differently. I welcome the motion because I believe it gives us the freedom to do that.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I'm glad to stand here today and support Mr Chudleigh's resolution. It's a non-partisan resolution, and I'm sure there won't be anybody voting against it because, as I say, it's non-partisan. It's something we should be doing in this House.

In the past and in the future—our governments seem to make laws in this House that take away property rights. We can go back to what the Conservatives did when they made the Niagara Escarpment Commission. They took away property rights. Now I understand this government today is bringing in the greenbelt legislation, which is going to trample property rights. If we're going to do that for the good of Ontario, then we must compensate landowners, and this is one way of doing it. It's a good way. I understand, though, that this program's going to be done in 2005. Mr Chudleigh says we should have a permanent one, and he's absolutely right.

Also, Mr Brown mentioned that we should co-operate with other groups out there that are buying privately owned land and making it public, giving it to conservation authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the conservancy.

1050

We have one group out there, the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy. It's led by Bob Barnett. I've met him and he's a good friend of mine. They used to fight people with their money all the time to say they couldn't have this on their private land. They got themselves together and finally figured out that it's better to buy the land, give it to a government agency and make it public, so that a lot of the sensitive land is preserved forever. We know about this in the Niagara Escarpment area, because our rights have been trampled up there by all governments.

If this government would like to save money, the thing they should do is freeze the natural area of the escarpment—just the natural area—get rid of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, save the \$4 million or \$5 million they blow on that, and put it into buying that land and saving that land forever.

I stand in support of this bill, and I am glad that Mr Chudleigh put it in.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to join the debate on the motion being discussed here today, brought forward by the member from Halton. I think it is important for everyone in the Legislature especially to be interested in what type of legacy we are leaving future generations. It doesn't matter which party you belong to—and this is the nice thing about Thursday mornings—we all hope we'll be able to reach decisions in this place that will make for a more prosperous Ontario.

There's another legacy that's just as important. We have a responsibility in the House to do what we can to ensure that ecologically sensitive lands are protected. Ontario is the most naturally diverse province in the

country, with 3,000 native plant species, 450 species of birds and 130 species of native butterflies. It is also, however, home to more endangered species than anywhere else in Canada. We need to work to protect their habitat. The important task has been underway for the past couple of years through the ecological land acquisition program. The program is part of Ontario's Living Legacy, the most comprehensive natural heritage program in provincial history.

Under the land acquisition program, privately owned environmentally sensitive lands have been acquired and added to the protected areas system. This has been especially important throughout southern Ontario, where land is predominantly under private ownership. I'm fortunate in my riding that we still have crown land available for public use. There are many thousands of acres that have been protected for the enjoyment of Ontarians and the protection of our natural heritage.

Not every part of the province has land protected in this way. The land surrounding the Frost Centre, for example, includes 24,000 hectares of crown land. That covers both my riding, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, and Norm Miller's in Parry Sound-Muskoka. I'm saddened that the present government has seen fit to close the Frost Centre and the important educational and stewardship programs it offered. Since the closure of the Frost Centre, we've gathered close to 15,000 signatures for its re-opening in some capacity. We especially appreciate the member from Peterborough's leadership in forming a committee to help us determine the best outcome we can for the municipality and the province with the Frost Centre. So I hope with that, the government, in the sudden closure of the Frost Centre, is recognizing the important goal of protecting the land and giving us a chance for further development of the Frost for future generations.

I want to also hold them to their promise not to sell the surrounding lands, the 24,000 hectares that I mentioned. The Leslie M. Frost Centre was the recipient of an Amethyst Award in 1998 in recognition of the quality and scope of their programs. UNESCO has just nominated part of Clear Lake, where there is an old hemlock forest, for recognition and protection. So we need more places like the Frost Centre.

The amount of community support out there to help the government protect these lands and work with all of us is a statement of how we're all committed to our future. We need to do more in terms of educating people about the importance of land stewardship, because as much as we are able to do in terms of acquiring land through programs such as the ELAP, it will never be enough to protect all of the many species at risk.

We also need to make sure that private landowners treat their land with respect. The goal of the ELAP is to enhance public ownership and stewardship of natural areas across Ontario where acquisition priorities have been established within the context of an approved provincial plan; for example, the Niagara Escarpment plan that was mentioned by my colleague, an improved land

acquisition strategy, for example the Lynde Marsh, or the acquisition agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada's eastern habitat venture.

The goal of protecting more land is laudable, but the program is in danger of fading away. The program, as stated by the member for Halton, was scheduled to end in March 2004, but the government has confirmed that the program will continue until March 2005. This time extension is limited, in that it only covers the continuation of projects already underway in the Rouge River Valley and Lynde Marsh.

The protection of ecologically sensitive lands should be able to continue. We all owe it to our children and their children to create a world where they would be able to enjoy nature as we have been able to. The Frost Centre and all the momentum that has been created around the Frost Centre for it to continue is an example. I want to thank the Perma-Frost group, who spearheaded all the notice to the province, the country and actually the world, and bringing groups to attention, like the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the World Wildlife Fund, for example, as well as individuals around the world.

So I encourage all members here today to support this motion—it's very important—and to remember that we need to continue on with our ecological preservation and keep the Frost Centre and reopen it.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this important resolution. I found out just this moment that I was going to have the opportunity, and so it is something that I'm very pleased about.

Mr Chudleigh, the member for Halton, has moved a resolution that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a permanent land acquisition program with long-term funding in order to ensure the continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive areas.

First of all, I want to commend the member for Halton. I've enjoyed working with him over the last eight, nine years, since his election to the Legislature in 1995. He's played a very important role within our government and now within our opposition caucus. I know that, in his past tenure as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, he showed a great deal of interest in these kinds of issues, so it's not surprising that he would bring this forward today. I know that he has worked within his riding to develop support for this proposal. He has worked with the Conservation Halton organization, and they're very supportive of this initiative.

Certainly, I would suggest that it's something that the government needs to consider and merits consideration. I'm aware that there are a significant number of programs of this type administered throughout the province that encourage this kind of thing, but at the same time, there isn't proper funding set aside to assist in the actual acquisition of the lands that need to be protected for future generations, as the member for Halton so eloquently pointed out. I expect that, in all likelihood, there

will be unanimous support for this initiative when the vote takes place. There are lots of nods around, but you don't know for sure until people come in and plan to vote. But it is something that I would hope doesn't just get passed here and action isn't taken.

I know that the Minister of Natural Resources, if he were here, would want to express his opinion on this. I would hope that he would be supportive. I would hope that there would be follow-up on the part of the government to make sure that the debate that takes place today isn't just a debate today, that there is follow-up and that very shortly the provincial government would bring forward the kind of program that the member for Halton is asking about.

Is there anybody else who wants to speak to this, or can we take the extra time?

Interjection.

Mr Arnott: Well, I've said what I wanted to say. I know there's another member of our caucus who had wanted to be here as well—the member for Durham—but I'm pleased to have had the chance to fill in briefly for him for a couple of minutes. I would give the remainder of the time to the member for Halton. Does that require unanimous consent?

Interjection.

Mr Arnott: No. OK, he has a little extra time, then, to sum up. I ask all the members of the House to support this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, you have two minutes on the clock and then you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Chudleigh: I'd like to thank the members who spoke to this motion and are supporting it. I'd also like to thank the members. I think this is the first hour of the past week that we've been through without ringing any bells, and I'd like to express my appreciation for the co-operation that the members have shown in the House today. Hopefully, that will continue even into the next hour, Ms Di Cocco.

I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton East, who very eloquently spoke to the bill and pointed out the one key phrase in her dissertation, which was, "Do we have the political will to do this?" Our future generations, of course, will judge us on whether or not we have that political will.

The member for Algoma-Manitoulin talked about the leverage that government programs have, which gives us added abilities to buy more land. That's a very, very important part of it—and, of course, funding. Even though you get great leverage, government funding is the salt that starts it off, and that's extremely important.

1100

I thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who was supportive, and also the member for Etobicoke Centre, who talked about the development of our population. Certainly we will be judged by future generations for the way we handle our development. If we do it well, we will be remembered with pride, and if we do it poorly,

as has happened in almost all other jurisdictions across North America which have had rapid development, that is something we will have to hold on our conscience.

The diversity of opinions that are expressed in the private members' business hour is always interesting, as the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound member talked about property rights.

I'll conclude with my two-minute wrap-up. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Fine. Member for Halton, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Chudleigh: The member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock spoke so eloquently about her experiences with a really truly beautiful piece of property that should be held for Ontarians and future generations in the Frost building and its surrounding property. If you've ever had an opportunity to drive up through Dorset, particularly, I would say, in the last week of September or the first week of October, that is truly one of the most beautiful drives in Ontario. The beauty of that drive actually rivals parts of Halton, if you can imagine; it actually does.

I'd also like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington, who spoke so well about the issue and hit upon the issue of the need for funding. It isn't that this funding has to be a huge amount of money. You're not going to get hundreds and two and three hundreds of millions of dollars. The idea is to start and to keep it going.

We did a tremendous amount of purchases with ELAP, the ecological land acquisition program, with \$10 million. I think there were over 17,000 acres of land, and very sensitive land. A lot of it was on the Niagara Escarpment. It was land that sat between conservation areas, land that had particular wildlife on it or that had some particular ANSI on it, an area of natural or scientific interest. We were able to do a great deal of work with \$10 million. Over 17,000 acres of land of a very sensitive nature were purchased.

I would like to thank the members of the House for their words this morning, their support for this bill. Hopefully, down the road, 10 or 20 years from now, we will take great pride in what we have been able to accomplish in Ontario, not only from this point on, but really from years gone by. As the member for Algoma-Manitoulin pointed out, these kinds of programs have been in place in Ontario for years; they are a part of our heritage.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Ms Di Cocco moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / Projet de loi 123, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils

provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have 10 minutes.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Each one of us comes to this House with different experiences. We are here because of many areas of expertise as well as our own involvement in our communities.

Mine arose, if you want, because of the whole notion of public bodies and how they do business. It's important that we bring to this chamber some of those experiences and, as we've heard from the private member's motion that preceded us, deal with issues that are very important to us as individuals but also that we believe are going to make this province a better place. We're only here for a short time, as many of you know, so in the time that we're here I think each one of us tries to leave our imprint and to make this province a better place.

This bill is about transparency in public matters. Currently in Ontario, there are some guidelines in various acts governing open meetings for public bodies, but there are no penalties imposed or mechanisms for complaint when those guidelines are not complied with. Again, many states in the US, including Michigan, have open meetings acts, with penalties placed on those who serve in public bodies who are found to have broken the rules.

What this bill does, what this bill hopes to do, is to put in a mechanism of complaints. So how do we do this? What the bill does is, it provides oversight powers to the Information and Privacy Commissioner to address those complaints. What this bill provides is that it ensures public access and more transparency to meetings of these designated public bodies. It also requests, when public bodies such as municipalities, school boards or hospital boards go in camera, that they provide the reason for going in camera. As you know, there are exceptions for going in camera. Those exceptions are legal matters, personnel matters or contracts that have to be signed. But many times it's based on an honour system. Therefore, there have been many, many times whereby that trust has been breached because no one knows when the in camera items are not in camera.

The public has a right to know. That is the premise of this bill. Public bodies, unlike private companies, are really doing public business. It is important, in the whole system of decision-making we have, that that is done so that the public understands how that body has arrived at that decision. How do you do that? You can only do it when it is open to the public.

I have had a great deal of support for this bill from many of the ministers in our government, as well as Dr Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, the Canadian Newspaper Association, the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, the Ontario Association of Broadcasters, the Ontario Press Council, Advocates in Defence of Expression in the Media, Mr Ken Bosveld, who's with the Brabant Newspapers and the Flamborough Review, and I can go on—there's a very long list—Duff Conacher from Democracy

Watch. Why? Because we have probably the most informed citizenry we've ever had in our society. Therefore, there is a higher level of expectation today that we are able to apply the scrutiny to decision-making.

I want to read something that I was really pleased to see. It was from a letter from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. She stated, "I believe that Bill 123 has the potential to transform Ontario into one of the leading jurisdictions in North America when it comes to open, transparent and accountable government." That's what this is about. It's about moving forward in a way that decision-making is done so that we are able to ensure the utmost transparency in how these decisions are made.

1110

I must say, as much as there are a lot of people who are supporting this, I also know there is in some quarters—I think AMO's position on open meetings is a little bit different from this. AMO I believe is looking to possibly suggesting that municipalities should have more leeway in conducting their meetings as they see fit. The view according to our professional in this matter, Dr Cavoukian, is that their recommendation would actually create a patchwork of inconsistent open meeting rules and have the potential to seriously diminish openness, transparency and accountability at the municipal level.

I know that AMO is agreeing to disagree with me, but I believe this bill, the notion that we now have to put another level of responsibility on board members—today, as you know, for instance, hospital boards do not have to conduct their meetings in the open unless they themselves choose to do so. When you think of the considerations, the decisions that are made, whether it's hospital boards, school boards, municipalities, universities or colleges, if you think of the decisions they are making on behalf of the public and in the expenditure of the public purse, it's important that we now move into what I call the 21st century and make sure that there is not just the honour system in opening the meetings, but that the system has in it more checks and balances that apply this level of scrutiny.

The intent of this bill is that if someone believes that in camera meetings are held inappropriately, there is a mechanism whereby they can complain to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, her office can investigate and she can then decide whether or not those rules have been breached.

There's a penalty of up to \$2,500 for members of those boards if they do not hold their meetings in the open. What is it? It's an incentive. It's an incentive to ensure that the public interest is maintained at all times. A system is never perfect, but I think for too long the honour system—and there are many examples that have been used. Just recently I was at a courthouse. There was a school that was closed in our riding and the parents took the school board before the court to see if they could change their mind, basically. The justice did say, "Well, some of these decisions were done inappropriately behind closed doors," but there is no mechanism of penalty, so all they can say is, "Just don't do it again."

There's a case that has gone all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in regard to this. The case was won but, again, there's no penalty. Therefore, even though it was deemed inappropriate, there was no mechanism except not doing it again.

I ask this House to support this bill because it is about better decision-making.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to begin by thanking our colleague the member from Sarnia-Lambton for bringing this bill forward for debate today, a bill that will improve public access and provide more transparency in public meetings of public bodies, including local councils and a number of other agencies, boards and commissions that are public.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton, Caroline Di Cocco, has been an ardent champion of open meetings for many years. It didn't start today, with this bill; she's been championing this cause since she got here a number of years ago.

I'll share a short story with you. In my first experience in the city of Brampton, I had the pleasure of meeting her mayor, Mayor Bradley, a very good mayor who has been there a number of years.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Mike Bradley, one of the best.

Mr Duguid: Mike Bradley; a good guy. He wasn't all that great to me that day, mind you, because I came to meet with him in what was supposed to be a private meeting, to talk about Toronto's waste going to Michigan through Sarnia, and he insisted that the meeting be public. Mind you, I sensed a bit of a set-up, because there were about three or four cameras strewn all over the place, so I knew what I was walking into. So I said no, and we came to meet in private. But that was my first experience with the passion that the people of Sarnia have for open meetings, and I think Mike Bradley probably learned a lot from Caroline Di Cocco and was probably following her lead that day; I just didn't realize it at the time.

I support this bill for a number of reasons. It's very broad in the number of bodies it covers: municipal councils, hospital boards, universities, colleges, police services boards, school boards, library boards, among a number of others. I think it's important that we reach out to those organizations, to make sure there's a proper protocol and make sure people have access to decision-making. Some of the decisions these boards and commissions make are very important, so I think it's terrific that it does reach out to all those organizations.

That being said, the vast majority of those organizations all comply with proper protocol when it comes to private meetings, but there are always exceptions. I think that's what this bill is all about: dealing with the exceptions.

In the short time I have left, I also want to talk about another reason I support this bill, which is that it gives teeth to the enforcement of this; it really does. By giving the privacy commissioner the ability to nullify a deci-

sion—trust me, as somebody who was on a local council, it would be extremely embarrassing for a commission, a council or a board of education to have one of their decisions nullified for not going in camera or not going into a private meeting properly. So I think that helps a great deal. Then there are also the fines that are within it for anybody who might want to mislead or misconstrue or try to get in the way of the investigations of the privacy commissioner.

That being said, I support this bill for a number of reasons. It's a good step forward and it's something that I welcome, something that I think may warrant some further discussion with some of the stakeholders as we go to committee. But as that moves forward, I think all members of the House should lend their support to this.

Mr Leal: It is a pleasure for me to spend some time this morning to comment on the details of Bill 123. I certainly want to salute the member from Sarnia-Lambton, Ms Di Cocco. Prior to coming here, I spent some 18 years in municipal politics in Peterborough, and it was well known throughout the province, through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, that Ms Di Cocco was indeed a champion of looking at the rules and regulations governing the conduct of public meetings at the municipal level in Ontario.

During my time on council, I did sit on the council proper of the city of Peterborough, and I was council's representative on the St Joseph's Hospital board, the library board and many other agencies, boards and commissions in the city of Peterborough. One thing that struck me when it came to dealing with items to go in camera and meetings to be held in camera was that there was enormous flexibility on the interpretation of the rules and regulations that were in place, and often the chairperson of the day would interpret those regulations and conditions from a very broad perspective. Often, as a member, from time to time, you would challenge the legitimacy of going in camera to discuss a specific issue.

One of the things I believe this bill helps to do is open up the public process. Certainly in 2004, one of the ways I believe we can address the issue of cynicism that covers all politicians and the political body proper these days is the whole issue of closed meetings and how we can open up the process so people can get the information that's really going on, that are not legitimate items that are discussed in in camera sessions.

1120

There was a case in Peterborough just recently with the Peterborough Examiner. They had made a request of the municipality under freedom of information. The issues that were denied them were very elementary issues dealing with a construction project in Peterborough.

This bill can go a long way to sharing a lot of details that were formerly held in camera, and I think this bill will advance the cause of making our meetings much more open.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Could I have some water, please? I think I'm going to need it. It smells a little better in here today, doesn't it? Were any

of you here last night? I want to thank the staff for taking care of that. I am still feeling the impacts, actually. For those of you who weren't here last night, we had a bit of smell coming from the new system that was put in. It smelled really bad in here—an oily smell—and some of us got sick.

I want to stand in support of this bill once again. I know I spoke in support of this bill or a similar bill, as I understand it, on October 1, 2001; in fact, I have my notes from that. What I wanted to clarify with Ms Di Cocco—and I just did briefly—is the difference between this bill and that bill. I'm not really sure what's been added, and perhaps one of your members, or you in the last two minutes, could clarify that for me because I'm tempted to say this should go back to committee for scrutiny of the details. I know it did before under the previous government when you brought it forward. I very enthusiastically supported it and still do, but I think it's necessary for it to go back to committee—I see you nodding your head that you agree with that—because there are some changes, to make sure we're able to scrutinize it because this is critical legislation. We really need it, but we have to make sure we get it right.

Having said that, I want to stand and congratulate Ms Di Cocco once again for bringing this forward. The details and the history of this are very interesting. I know some of you have heard Ms Di Cocco's story and understand why she's like a pit bull, dare I say, on this. It's probably not a good idea these days to tell anybody they're like a pit bull. She's like a dog with a bone on this. That's a better way to put it.

Having heard her story, you understand why. She knows first-hand the personal implications of not being able to get information that should be in the public domain. It's just a no-brainer. When you hear that story, you wonder how it could possibly happen. We shouldn't have to make legislation to prevent things like that from happening, but the fact it does happen shows very clearly why we need such legislation.

Even though it is private members', I would say that all members of my caucus support this bill and support the principle of transparency and accountability. Under the previous government we really saw that disappear in so many ways. When I spoke about this bill before, and Ms Di Cocco was in the Liberal opposition at the time, we told some stories about how difficult it was under freedom of information, for instance, under the previous government. They raised the cost of getting the information. Quite frequently, we found that when outside groups—or when I, as critic for the environment—were going forward and slapping down our big bucks, because they raised the cost so high to get information, we would literally hear about minister intervention to tell the FOI commissioner, "Don't give her that information." We had evidence of that and it infuriated me.

All kinds of groups were coming forward telling me they were unable to either afford or get information that should have been in the public domain. I know that's just one part of transparency and accountability. We're

talking about the bigger picture here: all public bodies and municipal councils.

This bill deals with two areas, and those are open meetings and conflict of interest. I understand those are the essential elements of the bill. I find that it's pretty clear; it's not convoluted like a lot of bills that you have to examine in close detail to figure out what they are talking about.

As we know, there are already Municipal Act provisions requiring open meetings of municipal councils and their boards, but as has been identified, we have seen—I saw it when I was on Toronto city council several years ago now, and we certainly hear stories from all over Ontario, where where it's pretty broad, very broad. You could drive a truck through it—

Mr Leal: You're talking about that Mack truck?

Ms Churley: The Mack truck—in terms of how some councils and some boards and commissions determine whether something should be in camera or not. You hate to see it, but sometimes it's a pretty slippery slope and the issue that they pick out of a whole—and that's not everybody; we need to be really clear here. As always, you need broader legislation to deal with the bad apples in these kinds of situations. We all understand, and Ms Di Cocco's bill makes this clear as well, that of course there have to be exceptions. There are certain matters that should not be discussed in a public domain, certain legal and personnel issues. That wouldn't be fair to the people involved. A city council or a particular body has to protect the legal integrity of certain situations as well. But I believe as well that the bill is very clear on that.

What this really comes down to is that for most of these matters we're talking about, the bill does require a judgment about balancing the public interest in openness with the same public interest in keeping the matter private. To me, that's a key point, that these things have to be balanced. I'm afraid, as I said earlier, that for all kinds of reasons we have seen many examples of where the balance has very clearly tipped the wrong way, and we need to fix that.

I'm not sure about this particular bill before us today, but what I'm talking about is probably very similar. You can nod if I'm right. In the old bill, section 4 imposed a fine of up to \$1,000. Is that still in the bill? That's changed to \$500 now?

Ms Di Cocco: It's \$2,000.

Ms Churley: Oh, it's up. Thank you for updating me here. It's \$2,000 now for each member of council or a board who is in attendance at a meeting or part of a meeting that improperly excludes the public. I think that's really important. Again, it is balanced with exemptions for members who object on the record or who honestly believe the exclusion was within the bounds of the act. I think Ms Di Cocco does go out of her way to make sure those kinds of concerns are taken into account.

The other thing, though, that I want to get into today is broader than this bill, and that is the need to have transparency in so many areas this bill doesn't actually deal with. One of the promises the Liberals made was to

bring in transparency on real-time disclosure of political donations. Now, I don't see—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): We're working on it.

Ms Churley: They're working on it, they say. Is there a way we can include that in this bill? Maybe we can make an amendment to this bill to bring in that promise by the Liberals in the election that they would bring in real-time disclosure of political donations. It hasn't happened yet, and of course I'm the democratic renewal critic in our party, as well as a few other areas you hear me talk about from time to time—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Now we'll see what Jack gave you.

Ms Churley: —such as the environment. Yes, real-time.

The Liberals, as you may have noticed, over the past several months have been holding a lot of fundraisers, and some of them—

Mr McMeekin: Consultations.

1130

Ms Churley: Consultations. You see? "Consultations." That's a good word you put in there, because these kinds of consultations mean people have to pay big bucks for them. You have to have the money to get in for these private consultations. The fact is, I believe this actually was a very important, and is a very important, piece of transparency and openness, and I understand why the Liberals, in opposition, did make that promise to make sure there's real-time disclosure of political donations. I know where it came from, and we fully support it. When the Tories were in power—and now it's the Liberals in power over there—we saw an awful lot of huge fundraisers, where people were paying thousands of dollars to get in to influence government decisions. These people often have a lot of influence over what governments decide to do with legislation. I will also say, to be fair, they don't always. Sometimes people pay big bucks to get in just because they support a particular party or it's kind of nice to rub shoulders with the Premier and the cabinet ministers. Nonetheless, we all know that, under this system, if people have an opportunity to spend big bucks to get an audience with the Premier or cabinet ministers when there's a particular piece of legislation coming through, they're going to use that opportunity.

We saw recently the energy minister had a big fundraiser, where people who provide power paid big bucks to come into—

Mr McMeekin: It was a charity.

Ms Churley: He says it's a charity. You see, if we had real-time disclosure, transparency in donations, as promised by the leader, you wouldn't have me up here complaining about this. Because I don't know who's coming to these fundraisers. I do know that a lot of developers, a lot of people with particular interests in certain pieces of legislation, in energy policy, development policy and all kinds of other areas, do pay big bucks to get into these fundraisers.

I think, as with this bill—and this is where the connection is—the public has the right to know. The public

has the right to know who's paying the big bucks to go to fundraisers with cabinet ministers and the Premier. In fact, I know the Liberals agree with me, because they made that promise. Now so far, a year later, this is another broken promise, because we haven't seen it yet.

We're talking today about a bill that is going to—I expect it will be passed this time, because the members of Ms Di Cocco's government, I'm sure, will come in and support her on this, and I know we will be supporting her as it goes through and is passed into law. That's a good thing. We are moving forward toward openness and transparency in government and public bodies.

But I want to come back to other areas again where we need that transparency, and that is around real-time disclosure of political donations. I think it's actually not only good for the people to know who's coming to these fundraisers, but it is actually good for the government to have that, and I believe that's why the Liberals promised it. It's not only good for the people to know, as I think they have the right to know—because we're all servants of the people; they vote us in here to represent their interests—but it also actually helps the government, whoever is in government, all of us, that they can stand up and say very clearly, “Yes, we had a fundraiser, and yes, these are the people who came.” It's all open; it's an open book. So I don't know why they haven't done that yet.

It would have been nice to see that—I don't know if there's any way to fit that into your legislation today, I would ask Ms Di Cocco. Maybe we can make an amendment at committee to move her government along in this promise they made for real-time disclosure.

I think that public disclosure is of paramount importance in every area where we as public servants influence public policy, and whatever happens out there in our communities, they, the people, have the right to know. My position is that unless there is a darned good reason to not make it public, then it should be made public. That's what this bill will do in certain circumstances. That would avoid a lot of the really awful things that have happened in the past, a real misuse of power going on behind closed doors that has had real adverse effects on the public. Money misspent and all kind of things have happened, and the public has not been able to get to the bottom of it. We're seeing the MFP computer inquiry going on here in Toronto right now and all of the revelations that are coming out of that. That's quite shocking.

A lot of these meetings were held in secret, behind closed doors, and some of them no doubt had to be held that way. But had many of them been more open and transparent, perhaps we wouldn't have seen the terrible mess we have seen happen at Toronto city council over that.

So I support the bill and I hope it goes forward to committee. Thank you very much.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Before I speak to this bill, I want to compliment the member for Sarnia-Lambton. She has believed in this with a passion, and it's because she's right. It is great to see this bill come forward.

The very premise of democracy is that it is a system that encourages, allows and needs the public to participate in every action and decision, maybe not actively at a board table, but to participate in it. When people are excluded from decisions that are being made by elected bodies, it produces a reaction, “Well, my vote doesn't count. My opinion doesn't make any difference. There's no point in my saying anything because they've already decided.” That gradually erodes away our democracy and we're seeing that with the decreasing voter turnout. People believe that others are making decisions that they have no control over.

There is a sense among some elected bodies that they own the assets they have been elected to manage. But the reality is that in many ways, in all ways, they're trustees. The public owns the schools, municipalities and hospitals. Every asset in this province is in a system, thank goodness, where all of the public owns it, and the public needs to be involved in that.

This bill identifies boards and organizations that will be subject to this bill. I look at some of them: board of directors and governors for universities, for hospitals, for colleges of applied arts, for board of health. These are organizations that truly have a profound effect on the community. First of all, they spend a lot of public money. That alone, to me, would be justification for saying that their meetings must be open. Even more than that, they affect the citizens in the community they serve.

A decision made by a hospital board has a profound effect on the community. What is happening at a community college or at a school board has a profound influence on the community, and yet we're seeing more and more restrictions. Rather than being more open, we're seeing more closed actions.

I believe that the health of a democracy can be judged by the freedom that the media enjoys. When I say the public needs access to these meetings, I don't necessarily mean that everyone in the community shows up and sits in on the meeting. But the media need to have full and open access to it so they can share with the community what decisions are being contemplated. Sometimes we see decisions made behind closed doors, and then the board chair comes out and says, “We made a very tough decision.” Some of these decisions are tough because they're the wrong decisions. If a decision is a good decision, it would stand the scrutiny of daylight, with the public present and in on it.

Elected officials in many ways know only what they're told. So if a perspective is given to them behind closed doors, and they base that decision on it, they have lost the advantage of all the expertise that exists in that community that could come forward to either support it or to say, “Have you thought about this?” or “Here's an alternate plan.” So I passionately believe that these bodies should hold open public meetings. In fact, in some cases for certain boards—community college boards, hospitals—I could make a case that these boards could be publicly elected rather than a closed-door system, because they're public bodies.

The other thing that has to happen is that the public has to know ahead of time what's being planned. If a decision is being made to change something and it's made at a public meeting, without the community knowing that it was coming, there is simply no possibility of their receiving the other side of the people coming out. That is happening at an appalling rate for many of the organizations across.

I respect that certain decisions have to be made in private if you're dealing with a personnel matter, a property matter or a legal matter. But if a municipality can do its budget in public session, then surely to goodness things like school boards and hospitals and community colleges can do it in public session.

There is nothing that is being done, outside of those areas, that should not be done in public. I do not believe an organization should make the decision itself as to what is public and what is private. I applaud Caroline for saying there would be a definition that cannot be broken on what can be done in private.

1140

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to make a few comments on this piece of legislation, Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public.

First of all, I want to say to the member that I congratulate you for bringing forth this bill again. I have questions about it and I'm very concerned about it. But anybody that has Mike Weir as a constituent has to be not too bad a person because I believe that Mike Weir, as one of our primary golfers in this country and in the world, has brought a lot of recognition to our country. The economic spinoff for the golfing industry as a result of Mike Weir and Lorie Kane and these people has been incredible, for our province and our country. I thank them for that, and that's great.

Anyhow, it gets us around to Bill 123. I guess my initial thought is that it can be very bureaucratic, and that's my worry, that we're just adding—as the citizens of the province get involved with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, I worry how far down that path we can go. I have to tell the member that in rural Ontario, in the county of Simcoe, I have sat on a number of these boards you talk about today: small library boards, community centre boards, hospital boards, the community college association, foundations and boards. I've got to tell you that I have sat with literally hundreds of people over the last 23 or 24 years who have been absolutely phenomenal and have not tried to hide anything.

By far, most of these people are volunteers in their communities and they have the best—for example, a library board. In the communities I've been involved with, we've had a hard time or difficult time finding people to even sit on these boards. I don't want to restrict people. That's my main concern with this piece of legislation, that there may be some restrictions in that area. In her concluding remarks, she may want to address that.

As well, I have to say some nice things about the boards. Our hospital board in Orillia, Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, the North Simcoe Hospital Alliance, Huronia District Hospital and the Penetanguishene General Hospital: Absolutely phenomenal people are on these committees. They work hard either on the foundation, raising funding, funds for special projects or the day-to-day operation of the hospital. Most of those folks don't receive a penny for anything. They just work hard and do the best they can for their hospitals. I don't want to say anything to those folks that would restrict them or take away their desire to be a part of that board.

It's the same thing with our community college system, Georgian College in Simcoe county, with the headquarters in the city of Barrie. We have satellite campuses throughout the county. In my particular riding we have Midland and Orillia campuses. Again, it's a volunteer board of directors that does an absolutely fantastic job.

As far as I know, their procedural manual calls for public meetings. You can go to a meeting whenever you want and get a deputation, the same as at the hospital board and the school board. I know our school board—I've been on many boards and sat in the audience. Certainly you're restricted in the amount of time you can speak or whatever. For example, in our Simcoe county board of education, I think you are allowed to bring up a topic one time in a deputation so that they don't have people coming back month after month trying to address certain issues like transportation or a funding issue that a parent may have. The board would have to deal with 55,000 students in a school board like Simcoe. We would want to make sure the board has some movement that way.

Overall, I'm very satisfied. The member has probably come across this issue and is very concerned about the fact that there may be some boards or public bodies across the province that are not doing that, but I have to tell you that I'm not hearing that in my riding. I certainly don't hear it from my municipalities, and they all have library boards and community centre boards. Very seldom do I have a problem. I have a few problems with people who claim the mayors and councils sometimes have certain issues and don't want to allow too much time for debate or for deputations, but overall I think they do a fairly good job. I'm really sorry that when I came here—I was late getting here to make my comments because I was at a House leaders' meeting, and that's not the best kind of meeting to be at these days. When I leave here—I have to go back—Mr Miller is coming in to wrap up for us. I have to tell you—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Everybody else has spoken.

Mr Dunlop: Everybody else has spoken? I guess I'm going to stay until Mr Miller arrives.

The bottom line is that, overall, the volunteers who make up the vast majority of the boards—here's my friend from London-Fanshawe; we just gave out volunteer award recognitions up in Barrie and Orillia. He did a great job, by the way. I believe there were something like

250 people at each of those events that the ministry held. Almost all of them were volunteers and contribute to their communities on library boards and, some of them, on hospital boards and foundations. I have a real problem trying to put through legislation that would hinder their desire to continue in the role they play in their communities. I'm not saying for a moment there is not a need in some other communities or some other organizations across our province, but I can tell you that from my perspective, I have a concern.

Now, let's talk about the government for a while—this just came to mind a few minutes ago when I was talking—the role of government and why this piece of legislation. I think of the government itself, and what I'm really concerned about is that last year you ran in an election. The Liberals had a platform, and if I had the time I would have brought it down. I think it's 147 pages of information on different topics, and a number of promises and what Mr McGuinty and his team would do if they were elected in this province. I found there were a number of promises made. At the time, during the election last fall, there was a lot of debate around what these promises would cost provincial taxpayers.

The one piece of information that came out rather quickly—and here's my buddy coming—was the previous auditor's report, that purple manual. He came out and claimed that the government had a deficit of \$5.8 billion. We argued about that until we had a confirmation later on this year. However, the document you didn't release was the document that was made up by the folks in the Cabinet Office projecting the cost, previous to the election, of each party's election platform. I understand that your party did everything possible, until we finally got it through the freedom of information act—we finally got it just a few weeks ago. You did everything possible to stop our party from receiving this document, which, of course, allocated something like \$18 billion a year—that's what we were told in the end—and that the ministers had to address this—

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Yours was 30, though.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, but the problem is, to the member from Northumberland, you're the government now and you're bringing in this legislation. You can say whatever you want—

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member to direct his comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry.

Mr Leal: What about your platform: \$30 billion?

Mr Dunlop: There you go again. You see, everything you do, you look at a previous government. All I'm asking today is, why didn't you release that document? You were quick to release the purple document from the Auditor General. They were quick to release that document, but they were not quick to release their own Cabinet Office document which called for billions of dollars. Of course, right to this day, 13 months after the election of October 2, you're still trying to blame the previous government for everything that's happening.

Sometime you have to take control of the situation. You have to remember that you're no longer in opposition. You actually have to govern over there, and it's about time you started to govern.

1150

Mr Leal: We are.

Mr Dunlop: Well, you know what? I can see how you're governing. I've been listening to question period, and we've got a lot of problems in this province today. A lot of it has been created in the last 13 months by some of your legislation. You know the one I'm talking about in particular. That's the health premium. It was called the health premium—

The Deputy Speaker: We do have a private member's bill before us, so I would ask the speaker to please—

Mr Dunlop: I'm going to wrap up right now, but what I'm trying to point out here is the secrecy of this government. It's the secrecy that you've held back. Now you're trying to come through with a piece of legislation, a private member's bill, that's going to pick on some little library board. That's what you're going to do with this piece of legislation: send some member of the library board to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So it is difficult for me to support this.

However, I have used up a lot of the time of my colleague Mr Miller. I know that he would like to make a few comments on this piece of legislation. Mr Miller, if it is OK with you, I'll turn it over to you now.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, we'll just check. Further debate? The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate in private members' time on Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public. Certainly, I would say that the goal stated on the cover of the bill is one that I don't think any of us are going to argue with. We all want to see business conducted in as open a manner as possible.

I know the member from Simcoe North, who was just speaking, has a lot of municipal experience; he was 18½ years on council. Councils do most of their business in an open manner, but there are some types of business that they don't, like labour relations, litigation or potential litigation, employee negotiations, and acquisition or de-acquisition of land.

In my riding we have 26 municipalities, so I would be concerned about how this legislation might affect those municipalities as well as other boards. I'm concerned that this may be quite bureaucratic in creating a lot of red tape and complications for those municipalities. Some of them are pretty small. Some are municipalities that only have 500 people in them.

I would also ask, is this just complicating things? We had a situation in the municipality of Magnetawan, where people in the community were concerned with how business was being conducted and had questions about it. They raised those questions. They delivered a petition to me, which I forwarded to the Minister of Municipal

Affairs and Housing. On a fairly speedy basis, the ministry looked into and actually did an audit on the municipality and looked at the way they were conducting their business. I'm pleased to say the result was that Magneta-wan was seen to be doing their business according to the rules. The point of that is that there were questions about how they were doing their business. The process worked very well in dealing with that.

I've also had situations where parents are frustrated with school boards and want to get more information and are having difficulty getting the information. That's an example of how we do, in some cases, need more open methods of dealing with business in some of these public agencies.

But I am concerned about some of the measures of the bill. There are certainly some, I would call them draconian, measures that are given to the commissioner, who is given the power to look into things. I'll just note, especially, section 14(1)(c), giving the commissioner power of entry and search, even when "the commissioner does not have reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed an offence."

I only have 50 seconds, so I'm not going to be able to go through all of the points that I wanted to be able to make on this bill. The type and nature of the power given to the commissioner or person or employee of the commissioner will allow him or her to operate in a world that is a little scary: no restrictions, no concern for rules of evidence, testimony by people who may be recounting pure gossip. The attacks will be coming against members of boards and commissions, mayors and other elected officials, many of whom are community volunteers or part-timers. On top of all that, the act grants immunity to the commissioner.

So the problem I have with the bill is that it's far too bureaucratic, and I'm concerned with some of the powers that are given to the commissioner.

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm happy to join in the discussion today, with regard to my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, to ensure transparency in government, agencies, boards, commissions and other publicly funded bodies.

There are far too few guidelines governing open meetings for public business in Ontario. There is far too much public money that's being spent but it's not open to public scrutiny. There are far too many penalties when you don't comply. The current rules governing openness of public meetings, in my opinion, are like a toothless tiger.

We've already heard that across the border in the US, in Michigan, they have an Open Meetings Act, with penalties placed personally on those who serve public bodies and who have been found to have broken rules. So the time has definitely come for us here in Ontario to adopt similar legislation. This position was supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner in her letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs just three days ago.

I'm also proud to indicate that in my riding of Niagara Falls the local newspaper, the Niagara Falls Review,

under the banner of the headline, "No Good Reason to Keep Boards' Business Private," wrote, "Many of these public agencies are made up of elected representatives and government appointees. Except for the Niagara Parks Commission, most of these agencies are spending public money. In many cases, government appoints the boards of governors.

"It makes sense that their meetings should be open to the public they serve and through which they are funded."

During my campaign, when I was running, I heard loud and clear from the people in my riding that they wanted more transparency in government at all levels. Since I've been in office, I've been hearing the same message over and over. Bodies like our hospital boards, colleges, universities—this will apply to them when this bill is passed.

I want to indicate that I'm also a supporter of other agencies that don't fall under this bill yet, and I hope to have that amended to be included, such as the CCAC in my riding, which did not renew the contract of our VON and lost a valuable service, or the Niagara Parks Commission, which brought in the idea of a gondola and created a huge uproar in our community, without having public input before this decision was made. Only after it came to the public did they participate, and the cry came out loud and clear that they did not want the falls themselves to become a tourist amusement centre with this concept.

The purpose of the bill is to provide more public access and transparency to the public and to make these boards accountable. Under this legislation, organizations will have to provide public notice, including minutes. In essence, they're going to have to become accountable.

I'm extremely pleased to have an opportunity to express my opinion and that of my riding and show our support for this bill. I also want, on a personal level, to congratulate Caroline Di Cocco for her leadership in bringing this bill forward. I was glad to have the opportunity to partner with her in bringing it forward on behalf of my community, who loudly and clearly have told me they have concerns about two of our agencies that they feel have not been accountable to the people in the Niagara region.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: If we can just keep the conversations to a minimum, it would be appreciated. We have two minutes now to hear from Ms Di Cocco in her reply.

Ms Di Cocco: I want to thank my colleagues and all those who have spoken to the bill and those who support it. There's a clear connection, by the way, to the government's transparency agenda. I'm pleased to say that, if this passes, we're more than willing to go to committee so that it can be tweaked and addressed and we can look at ways to make it better.

I was a little bit disappointed with the remarks coming from the opposition. I'm quite surprised at their interpretation of the bill, because it is about better govern-

ance. It has nothing to do with being utterly bureaucratic, as has been stated. There is the right of the public to know. This has the support, as I said, of many different sectors: the dailies, the Ontario Community Newspaper Association, the Ontario Association of Broadcasters, Democracy Watch. Many organizations across this province have been looking for some checks and balances in public bodies.

I also want to thank in particular the member from Toronto-Danforth, because it is about our experiences that we bring to this chamber, an idea that would make the whole system better. That's the intent of this bill. And I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for his support, and the members from Peterborough, Niagara Falls, Prince Edward-Hastings and others, and I ask you to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the members for their co-operation this morning. The time for private members' public business has expired.

LAND ACQUISITION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item 35, which is private members' notice of motion 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll deal with this after ballot item 36.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item 36. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All of those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members for a vote. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

LAND ACQUISITION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 35, private members' notice of motion number 24, standing in the name of Mr Chudleigh, which reads:

"That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a permanent land acquisition program with long-term funding in order to ensure the continued acquisition of environmentally sensitive areas."

All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Dunlop, Garfield
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Marsales, Judy
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand.

Nays

Matthews, Deborah

Mauro, Bill

Smitherman, George

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 3.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The doors will be open for 30 seconds before the next vote.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 36, standing in the name of Ms Di Cocco: second reading of Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public.

All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand.

Nays

Dunlop, Garfield

Hardeman, Ernie

Murdoch, Bill

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 3.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96—Ms Di Cocco?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Yes, I would like the bill to be sent to finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be sent to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs?

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

A majority is in favour. It will be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been dealt with, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My statement is directed to the Minister of Culture, and it concerns the Banting homestead in my hometown of Alliston.

Canadians will know Sir Frederick Banting as the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient for medicine in 1923. He was a noble man who did not seek to profit from his discovery. Instead of applying for a patent for his life-saving serum, he sold the rights to the University of Toronto for one dollar to ensure that insulin would be affordable for the millions of people across the world who suffer from diabetes. His contributions to medicine were so significant that viewers and listeners of the CBC recently recognized him as one of our top 10 greatest Canadians.

The home and buildings on the farm where Sir Frederick Banting was born on November 14, 1891, are deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society. Edward Banting, the last owner of the homestead, bequeathed the property to the society in 1999 so that they could preserve and maintain it for the benefit of all Canadians.

The town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has tried to reach an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use parts of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting. Unfortunately, the historical society has been unreceptive to the town's bid and residents of my riding are worried that the land may be sold for development.

I'm calling upon the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government to step in and ensure that this important piece of Canadian history is preserved for generations to come.

JOHN SZOKE

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Thank you for the opportunity to inform the House about a special award presented to a resident of my riding of Niagara Falls. I was present when Mr John Szoke was presented with the Knight Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary from the Hungarian ambassador, Dénes Tomaj.

John was born in Transylvania in 1937, settled in Hungary in 1957 and moved to Niagara Falls subsequently. He was instrumental in the building of the first cultural centre dedicated to Hungarian-Canadian residents of the Niagara area. After being elected as president in 1983, he has been re-elected for 21 years, something I think we all wish we could do.

John has been leader of many fundraising events to support the Hungarian community, which include conducting a weekly bingo for the past 20 years. Over the years, he has dedicated his time and efforts to raise money for Hungarian groups and causes in our community. He's currently president of the North American Hungarian National Association.

I'm sure this House will join me in congratulating John in recognition of this award and thanking him for his continued effort to ensure that all who now call Canada their home are able to continue to enjoy the customs and traditions of their native country, and ensuring aid to the less than fortunate citizens of Hungary and Transylvania.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the close to 100 community volunteers in Durham riding who were honoured on October 26 with community volunteer service awards.

These awards went to outstanding community volunteers such as Doris Hills and Elaine Baker of the Solina Women's Institute, who were each honoured with more than 50 years of service. Also recognized for more than 50 years was Ann Evans, of the Orono Horticultural Society. A couple, Isabelle and Orville Challice, of the Orono Horticultural Society, were honoured for 40 years of service to their community and together. Pat Best and Jean Taylor, of the Solina Women's Institute, were honoured for 40 years of service.

Other long-service volunteers are Erich Poehlmann and Michael Rausch of the Donauschwaben Park in Blackstock. They were recognized for 30 years' service to the community. Thirty-year volunteers also included Esther Allin, Beatrice Higgins and William Tambllyn of the Durham Central Agricultural Society; Cor Mostert and Dini Schoenmaker of the Orono Horticultural Society; and Eileen Down of the Marnwood Lifecare Centre.

Unfortunately, time limits do not permit me to name all the volunteer service award recipients from my riding. I thank them. Whether they have volunteered for a year or 50 years, every volunteer brings unique gifts to their

work and help in the community. I'm pleased to thank and pay tribute to the 2004 Volunteer Service Award recipients of Durham and to the volunteers everywhere who make Ontario a great place to live, work and raise your family

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): The most important issue in any community is safety. When a community is not safe, when residents are afraid to walk to the corner store after dark, when quiet streets inspire fear, not comfort, every other issue is secondary in importance. This could not be more true than it is for the residents in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who have unfortunately, as of late, suffered from a rash of violence in our community.

I have been working hard to make my community safer. As a long-time supporter of community policing, I have continuously advocated for the installation of a community storefront police station on the Lakeshore. I have attended community meetings where crime and safety are topics of discussion. I have met with our local superintendent, with local police officers and articulated my concerns to the chief of police on a number of occasions.

I've also worked in partnership with the municipal councillors in my riding to get more police on the streets, because if you ask residents, police officers are the best way to reduce the amount of crime and make people feel safer. Their response is always the same: Put more cops on the beat. That will mean safer streets.

That's why I've recently conducted my second Etobicoke-Lakeshore safety audit in conjunction with LAMP and the Etobicoke Take Back the Night committee. That's why I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to and is delivering 1,000 new police officers in Ontario.

I want to applaud the residents of my community who continue to work on this issue, and to let them know that I will not let them down.

LOBBYISTS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We learned yesterday that the Minister of Agriculture and Food has been bought and sold by an anti-farming lobbyist. The minister needs to know that if he turns his back on one group of farmers, he turns his back on all farmers.

Here is what Dwayne VanBesien, a tobacco farmer from my riding, had to say about this:

"Farmers of Ontario have to rely on their Minister of Agriculture in good times and in bad—that's why he is there, for all farmers, including tobacco farmers. With the latest announcement that Agriculture Minister Peters will be the guest of honour at an event hosted by an anti-tobacco lobbyist, in my opinion confirms that he is turning his back on us. It feels like he's conspiring to put us completely out of business in Ontario, and that's

appalling since he's supposed to be representing us as farmers."

Yesterday, in response to a question from my colleague Toby Barrett, the minister refused to defend the fact that an anti-farmer lobbyist was organizing a \$300-a-head fundraiser on his behalf. I wonder how, in good conscience, he can continue as Minister of Agriculture while so arrogantly ignoring the needs of his stakeholders. Obviously, for our Minister of Agriculture, lobbyists come first and farmers come last.

ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): An e-mail from a Niagara Falls resident: "I was going to purchase a new van to transport disabled son to his daily activities. He's 26 years old and gets around in an electric wheelchair. I learned that the government no longer rebates the PST on these vehicles (hidden in the last budget). I am 66 years old and on a small pension, which makes it difficult to take care of my son in our home without this additional expense. Any help you can give me and others like me would be greatly appreciated.

"So much for no tax increases."

That's why the Niagara Amputee Association, based in St Catharines down in Niagara region, is circulating a petition. The petition says that the government is going to "eliminate a key program offered," known as the PST sales tax rebate, "for vehicles purchased to transport persons with permanent physical disabilities.

"This program is non-means tested, and for middle-average income families has represented virtually the only assistance offered by the province.

"We feel that such action by a Liberal government that was elected on the promise that it would be a kinder, gentler government is reprehensible. This proposal is another example of bad faith and voter betrayal."

I'm inviting people—and thousands already have signed this petition. New Democrats insist that the legislation, which hasn't even been presented to this House yet, which repeals this modest level of support for persons with disabilities, be brought forward so that it can be defeated by this House, by any fair-minded member of any political party who has any sense of compassion and regard for the struggle that persons with disabilities have imposed on them, still today in 2004 on a daily basis, in this province of Ontario.

1340

ADULT EDUCATION

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Kathleen Wynne, member for Don Valley West, was given the task of seeking public input into adult education in Ontario. On her mission, she visited one of the St Charles Adult Education Centres in the wonderful riding of Hamilton West. It gives me great pleasure today to recognize the St Charles Adult Education Centres under the auspices of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

I also want to thank Jack Maga, principal of continuing education and staff, as well as the 50 students of the centre for taking the initiative to come to Queen's Park and visit with us today.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of speaking to an adult ESL class at St Charles. Not only was I able to provide these people with a bit of insight into the community, but I also taught them a little bit about the role of an MPP for Hamilton West. But I was the one who learned more than I shared, for I learned a great deal that day from the students themselves: their lives before coming to Canada and how each and every one of them are working toward establishing themselves in the new community of Hamilton. I was humbled by that experience and went away thinking about the courage each and every one of them exhibited in coming to Canada.

St Charles centres not only welcome new immigrants, they also serve Hamiltonians looking to upgrade their education and improve their career opportunities. I am proud that the Liberal government is committed to providing Ontarians with access to an adult education and training system that addresses current and anticipated economic and social challenges.

HEALTH CARE

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to take this time to talk about what health care looks like in the province of Ontario these days. Once a system that experienced cuts and more cuts, and a system that was attacked by the former government, it is now a system that is being rebuilt to the standards that Ontario was once known for—

Interjections.

Mr Wilkinson: —despite the protestations of the members to the right of me.

We're working to reduce wait times by allocating resources to purchase equipment such as MRIs for our hospitals. We're creating 2,400 full-time nursing positions so there is actual staff to use that equipment. We're ensuring those nurses are safe when they are on the job by buying new patient lifts that were desperately needed.

The health care system doesn't just mean hospitals. The health care system also includes home care. We understand the importance of home care, and that is why we've made investments to provide 21,000 more Ontarians with home care this year alone.

Most importantly, we set a new tone in affirming that we believe in universal health care, and that is why we introduced and passed the commitment to health care act. Personally, the fact that we are inoculating children in this province against preventable diseases—against pneumonia, against chickenpox, against meningitis—is the forward thinking that our government brings to this. It's far better to keep children safe than allow them to be sick and then care for them, I'm sure we would all agree.

We believe that Ontarians deserve a health care system that is second to none, that gives them the care they

need, when they need it, with an OHIP card, not a credit card. That is what we are delivering.

EDUCATION

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to talk about Ontario's education system. Just over a year ago, we took office and, when we did, we pulled up our sleeves and got to work.

One of our first priorities was Ontario's children and their education. I'm proud to stand here and say that we're making real, positive changes with regard to how children learn in this province. Not only do we have reduced class sizes so that every child can get the attention they need, but we also hired new teachers, including lead teachers, who can help those children who need it most. In addition to the lead teachers, we've also launched a literacy and numeracy strategy.

For eight years, Ontario students had to deal with cuts to education and bigger class sizes. They sat on radiators when there weren't enough chairs. They shared books because there weren't enough resources. Our children spent their time in schools that were crumbling. The education system under the Tories was unacceptable, and every day we're taking steps to correct it. The resources are being put back into education to ensure that our children go to schools that are well maintained, properly staffed and provide an enjoyable learning environment.

We're really making a difference when it comes to education. I can tell you that I've been to the schools myself. My own son goes to school in our system. Each and every day I go to schools and talk to principals and teachers, they're saying that this government has been a breath of fresh air when it comes to education in the province of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREENBELT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR

LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994 / *Projet de loi 135, Loi établissant la zone de la ceinture de verdure et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur la planification et l'aménagement de l'escarpement du Niagara, à la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges et à la Loi de 1994 sur la planification et l'aménagement du territoire de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerretsen?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'll wait until ministerial statements.

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Mr Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Caplan?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'll wait until ministerial statements.

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr O'Toole?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The intention of the bill is to reward commuters and those who use public transit. They can help themselves while helping the environment as well as traffic congestion on our roads. This bill will give incentives directly to those who use public transit.

1350

VISITORS

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'd just like to draw to members' attention that there are a number of people from Guelph-Wellington in the gallery today, in particular, my parents, Jean and Earl MacNaughton.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think it's extremely important that we recognize the deputy mayor of Markham, Mr Frank Scarpitti, who is in the gallery.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think it's important that I recognize the presence of one of my constituents in the gallery as

well, Ken Seiling, chairman of the regional municipality of Waterloo.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Might I introduce at this point and recognize in the gallery as well the mayor of Burlington, Rob MacIsaac.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr Eves and Mr Flaherty exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Flaherty assumes ballot item 44 and Mr Eves assumes ballot item 66; and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 39.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Agreed.

VISITOR

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to welcome Councillor Erin Shapero from the city of Markham.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREENBELT

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I rise today to introduce—actually, it's been introduced—a bill that, if passed, will have a profound effect on the future of this province.

We want to ensure that as Ontario strengthens, grows, builds and develops, this growth will always be balanced with care for and preservation of green space. We want to ensure that as more and more people are accommodated in central Ontario, there will be simultaneous protection of our natural resources, watersheds, ecosystems and agricultural and rural lands. We want to ensure that as generation follows generation, Ontarians, young and old, will always know the delight of walking through the fallen leaves on a crisp autumn day like today, or finding their way along that overgrown trail deep in the forest, or picking out the perfect locally grown pumpkin to carve

for Halloween or enjoying the produce of our agricultural lands.

This proposed legislation, if passed, will create a permanent legacy to Ontarians of more than one million additional acres of protected countryside in the greater Golden Horseshoe region. Our economy is strong. Our population is growing. It is expected that four million more people will arrive in Ontario by 2031, the majority of them settling in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

The proposed Greenbelt Act, 2004, is a clear response to this success. Our government is planning carefully for this population growth and the two million jobs that will accompany it, and we are planning just as carefully for what must be preserved. Our government is determined that Ontario will not be paved over by sprawl, as has previously occurred. We intend to target growth, curb sprawl, and protect the farmlands and green space that mean so much to healthy communities and to our quality of life.

With this legislation, we are proposing a permanent greenbelt across the greater Golden Horseshoe, a dividing line, so to speak, between the mistakes of the past and the promise of the future. This House will recall that it previously passed legislation which allowed for the establishment of a greenbelt study area on lands that extended from Niagara Falls to Rice Lake near Cobourg to north of Barrie. The Greenbelt Task Force, under the leadership of Burlington mayor Rob MacIsaac, who is here today as we've already heard—and I should introduce another member of the task force who is here today as well, Mr Don Ziraldo from the Niagara area. As you heard earlier, individuals that have been introduced as well that have a great interest in this are Ken Seiling, the Chair of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Frank Scarpitti, deputy mayor of the town of Markham, Erin Shapero, a councillor in the town of Markham, and also accompanying them is Fran Agnew, the executive assistant to the mayor of Burlington.

The Greenbelt Task Force was asked to research and consult widely across this area and provide our government with advice on the scope, content and implementation of a permanent greenbelt. The task force did an outstanding job and I would like to thank all of the members for their hard work and significant contribution.

Guided by their recommendations, our government has drafted legislation and a plan that sets out the clear objectives of the permanent greenbelt in the greater Golden Horseshoe area. If passed, the act will:

First, permanently protect thousands of acres of prime agricultural lands and tender fruit lands, ensuring the continuing strength of our agricultural industry and enabling farmers to keep on growing the food that we as Ontarians need. The proposed legislation will prevent any action that could reduce the total area of these protected lands.

Second, it will ensure that the lands that grow specialty crops, as well as other prime agricultural lands, will continue to be used only for farming, not for urban uses like residential subdivisions or major recreational uses such as golf courses or ski hills.

Third, it will preserve our watersheds, rivers and forests, thereby protecting our water and air.

Next, it will promote recreation, sport and tourism by establishing a trail system, open spaces and parklands. It will conserve and make available the natural resources critical to a thriving economy, and it will set strict limits on where urban boundaries can and cannot expand.

We are striking a clear balance between protecting vital green spaces and meeting the needs of our growing communities. Our proposed legislation, if passed, will set the stage for a more detailed greenbelt plan. Our draft plan is supported by maps that outline the exact parameters of lands being considered for greenbelt designation. For instance, you will see the areas that we wish to preserve in the Niagara tender fruit lands and the Holland Marsh area. You will see the importance of the connection between Rouge Park, the Oak Ridges moraine and Lake Ontario. You will see the broad sweeps of land we want to protect in northern Durham and York regions and west of the Niagara Escarpment, which are home to significant natural features and fertile agricultural lands.

Over the next number of weeks, we will consult widely on this draft plan. We know there will be great interest from across the province and indeed from across the country. Ontarians are paying close attention. They know this is perhaps our last chance to make a real difference to the quality of life in the most rapidly expanding region in Canada.

Our proposal for a permanent greenbelt works hand in hand with the proposed long-term growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe being spearheaded by Mr Caplan. The complementary pieces of legislation that we are introducing today, if passed, will ensure a balance in environmental, social and economic interests that will benefit Ontario now and in the future.

1400

I'm often asked, what is a greenbelt? Let me simply say that a greenbelt is the difference between focused growth and sprawl. A greenbelt is the difference between getting caught in gridlock or getting home on time. A greenbelt is the difference between being surrounded by buildings and being able to escape to the healthy outdoors. A greenbelt is a pivotal component in building strong communities, protecting the environment and strengthening the economy. And in Ontario, a greenbelt can be permanent.

GROWTH PLANNING

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Today I am extremely proud to be tabling legislation that will help us plan for growth in a strategic, rational and balanced way at a critical time in our history. The proposed legislation that I tabled would help all parts of Ontario plan for the growth they need to build strong communities.

In some parts of our province, communities are struggling to keep up with the impacts of rapid growth such as gridlock, sprawl, declining air quality and a whole host of

other problems. In other parts of the province, however, communities are suffering because growth isn't happening. They need jobs, they need investments, and they need opportunity. This proposed legislation would enable the government to take a strategic approach to planning for population and employment growth in a way that makes sense for the entire province.

Unfortunately, the former government did not have a plan to manage growth. The former government's poor planning and neglect of infrastructure has left a legacy of uncontrolled urban sprawl, disconnected and cobbled-together infrastructure, and more gridlock and congestion.

This government is taking a different approach. We want to begin planning in a balanced and coordinated fashion. The Places to Grow legislation would enable us to make real this government's commitment to ensuring that we have the infrastructure in place to support that growth. Establishing a long-term vision and plan for renewal of Ontario's public infrastructure is paramount to ensuring we develop strong and sustainable communities. We are developing a 10-year infrastructure plan that will place emphasis on the health, water, transportation and education sectors. Investing in infrastructure is all about investing in our future prosperity.

This proposed legislation would ensure that whatever we do, we would always ensure the protection of our environment, our agricultural lands and our natural resources.

By the year 2031, we estimate that more than four million additional residents will call Ontario home. We must plan now for that growth. We must plan in a way that integrates and brings together all of the elements required to build strong communities and a robust economy, while at the same time protecting our environment and other valuable natural resources.

Currently, we do not have comprehensive legislation that looks at the total picture, that goes beyond simply land use planning or single issue elements of planning such as what is found in the Environmental Assessment Act. The legislation that I've introduced today would enable us to coordinate growth and capital planning and a plan for economic expansion, infrastructure renewal and to protect the environment. The proposed Places to Grow Act would put into place the legal framework necessary to move forward with growth plans for geographic-specific areas of this province.

As honourable members may recall, earlier this summer I was honoured to release a discussion document called Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future. The discussion paper included a strategy to meet the growth challenges of the greater Golden Horseshoe. This strategy was developed with a wide range of stakeholders, and it was used to obtain further input from the public. The discussion paper was the first step toward a draft growth plan here in the greater Golden Horseshoe. This would be our first plan under the proposed Places To Grow Act.

I am delighted to inform the House that Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future was incredibly

well-received. More than 1,600 people from all walks of life attended public meetings and we received over 500 written submissions. People told us they wanted the strategic direction from the province. They approved the idea of taking a coordinated approach to growth planning.

In terms of growth planning, the greater Golden Horseshoe of course demonstrates an urgent need for an improved approach. It is one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada; in fact, one of the fastest-growing in North America. Today there are almost eight million people living in this region; by 2031, we project there will be almost 12 million.

If we don't do something about planning for this growth, we can expect business-as-usual development to consume 1,000 square kilometres of prime agricultural land. That's an area twice the size of the city of Toronto. We could expect gridlock to worsen and commute times in the GTA to increase by an additional 45%. We could expect our environment would suffer further degradation. We could expect that air quality will decline, with automobile-related emissions increasing by some 42%. We could expect that affordable housing would become harder to find.

I am proud to be introducing Places to Grow legislation in this House this afternoon at the same time that my colleague John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, introduces the proposed greenbelt legislation. These two pieces of legislation complement one another.

But as I said before, it isn't all about the greater Golden Horseshoe. We've also heard from stakeholders and municipalities in northern Ontario, in eastern Ontario and in southwestern Ontario. They too are looking for strategic direction from the province in planning for growth.

The legislation I am tabling today would help all geographic regions come to grips with where and how they should grow. It would encourage growth planning to determine the infrastructure that might be needed to support that growth. It would help ensure that Ontario as a whole benefits economically, socially and environmentally while minimizing the disadvantages associated with high growth rates.

This legislation is not about dictating how this would be done. It is about working together: different ministries, the municipalities, business leaders, industry, environmental and community groups, and at the forefront, the public of the province of Ontario.

The Premier and all members of the government join with me today in our commitment to ensure that we plan in a rational, balanced and coordinated way.

I would particularly like to acknowledge my colleagues, and their ministries, who worked particularly closely with us on this proposed legislation: my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay; Steve Peters, the Minister of Agriculture and Food; Leona Dombrowsky, the Minister of the Environment; Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation; Greg Sorbara, our Minister of Finance; and Joe Cordiano, the

Minister of Economic Development and Trade. As I've already mentioned, it could not have happened without John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Municipal leaders, including the mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Burlington, Rob MacIsaac, and regional chair Ken Seiling recognize the value and the crucial importance of growth management.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the municipalities for their input and their very valuable suggestions and recommendations. Their involvement has helped enormously as we worked on the development of this proposed legislation. Municipalities will continue to play a major role in growth planning.

If this House passes the Places to Grow legislation, we would work with our municipal partners and other stakeholders to determine our priorities. Together, and that's quite a departure from the past, we will plan for growth in a way that will ensure we leave communities for future generations that we can be proud of.

In the year 2031 we want our communities to be places where they have access to jobs, transit, hospitals, schools and recreational facilities. We want them to be places where we can accommodate growth while at the same time ensuring clean water, thriving places of nature and a rich agricultural economy.

We want our families of tomorrow to be able to live, play, work and participate in livable communities. It is up to us here in this Legislature to take the necessary steps so that we can leave this legacy for our children and for their children.

This proposed legislation is about helping the people of Ontario and the government of Ontario make better choices for a brighter future.

1410

GREENBELT

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in response to the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Public Infrastructure Renewal. I too want to welcome and thank the efforts of Mayor MacIsaac, Donald Ziraldo from Inniskillin wines, and all those involved in this initiative. It was a lot of hard work that they now have handed off to the government to implement.

We in the opposition, I have to tell you, are going to be a bit sceptical. Watch closely, because Dalton McGuinty's record in keeping his promises is certainly not admirable. We all remember Dalton McGuinty's solemn promise to stop houses in the Oak Ridges moraine and how quickly he backtracked from that promise once he got into office. The Minister of Municipal Affairs himself was chased by a giant chipmunk calling him on his promise, and one wonders too if the big pipe project in York region runs against the grain of Dalton McGuinty's promises during the election.

Obviously, with respect to the greenbelt initiative, let me say that we Conservatives support the goal of the

addition of environmentally valuable land to protect its status. I am proud to have been part of a government, under Mike Harris, which had the greatest addition of protected green space in the history of the province through Ontario's Living Legacy and 378 new parks and protected areas, bringing the total to 23.4 million acres of land across the province.

My colleague the member from Halton led the way on the Great Lakes Heritage Coast initiative, and continued his dedication to the cause with his resolution before the assembly today to purchase park lands, passed in the House. My congratulations to the member for Halton for his ongoing efforts.

I'm proud to be part of the Progressive Conservative Party, which has a proud record in this area beginning with Frost, then to Robarts, the construction of the Bruce Trail, and one of my friend from St Catharines's favourites, protection of the Niagara Escarpment as well. I think it's important that we recognize the foundation for today's initiatives in the Smart Growth panels and the Oak Ridges moraine work begun by Minister Chris Hodgson, accompanied by David Young. I think it's important for us—environmental groups acknowledged this today—to thank Ministers Hodgson and Young for their efforts in bringing this initiative forward.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): In many senses, many parts of this are simply a red ribbon tied around good Conservative ideas. But there are some major gaps that you have left out here.

First, the leapfrog impact: My colleagues in Simcoe county are, by way of example, already dealing with the impacts of the leapfrogs. For those folks driving to work in the GTA down the 400, down the 401, down the QEW, caught in gridlock without a serious, realistic and prompt transportation strategy, that long snake of traffic down those highways is going to get even longer. No comfort to those commuting from Barrie, Durham or Waterloo; they can now anticipate a longer commute unless you bring forward a real transportation strategy immediately to complement this initiative.

Secondly, it is incumbent upon the government to ensure an adequate long-term supply of land for housing as part of this plan. If housing supply is strangled, that Canadian dream to own your own home, to have a backyard when you raise your daughter, to have your own garden, will become increasingly unattainable for working families in Ontario without that long-term housing plan.

Both of these are areas that I had hoped the minister, with Places to Grow, would bring forward hand in hand with the greenbelt initiative. I respect the work he has done to date, but, to take a turn on Premier Davis's old quip, this once again is simply a plan to make plans. I hate to quote Walter Mondale, it pains me to do so, but, Minister, where's the beef? We need real projects, real infrastructure investment in our highways, in our schools, in our hospitals, instead of simply a plan to make plans.

With respect to agriculture, we wonder about the role of that ministry. You can't simply wave a magic wand and keep agricultural land in production. If you want to save the farmland, you have to save the farmer, and certainly farmers have no place in the Dalton McGuinty government of today. Where is the support plan for agricultural viability in the greenbelt area and the province of Ontario?

I'm always encouraged by the addition of green space and was proudly part of a government with an excellent record of doing so. But there are major missing pieces: transportation, home ownership and agriculture. Too much of this is a plan to make plans because we all know, when Dalton McGuinty is charged, that plan can change awfully fast.

GREENBELT

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): First of all, I, too, would like to congratulate and thank the greenbelt task force and all of the other stakeholders that I know worked so very hard on this. I know you put in a lot of long hours of your time, and we thank you for that. I think you did a very good job on behalf of all Ontarians.

Because I only have a few minutes here, I'm just going to get right to the issue: the holes in the greenbelt legislation that we need to have plugged. I'm glad it's going out to committee. It's an opportunity to fix some of these problems. I only have a few minutes to tell you about some of them.

Some of the loopholes that I pointed out in committee and in the House have been addressed, and I'm glad to see that. About five out of the 10 hotspots are dealt with, a couple of others semi-dealt with and some not dealt with at all. Some of them are extremely significant.

The greenbelt, for instance, missed most of Simcoe, where developers are set to build a project that'll gobble up close to 9,500 acres. Most of it is prime agricultural land. The proposed subdivision would also pack an extra 75,000 people into the area. That's about four times more than the town's projected population growth. This is a major problem and we have to fix that.

Such development is accompanied by transportation demands. Originally, this development was driven by a proposed Highway 427 extension. Discussion on this has been muted in the growth management plan, but with this development now happening, the pressure for it to happen is going to be greater and, as my colleague Michael Prue likes to say, quoting from *Field of Dreams*, "If they build it, they will come."

Then there is the area within the greenbelt still eligible for development. You pointed out this greenish-yellowish area on the map. That's likely where developers will very quickly start purchasing those parcels of land because there are no clear guidelines, implications or indications of the direction you want to see for this buffer land in between.

There are the greenbelt hotspots that I mentioned, areas that need to be included in the greenbelt for the

purpose of protecting more prime agricultural land, biodiversity and water. Some were brought into the belt, like the Duffins Rouge—and I'm glad of that—as a result of concerted pressure by local activists. That was done and that's great. But then we have the Castle Glen Development Corp, which is going to locate a resort community into a full-time community on the Niagara Escarpment. This will be the largest development on the escarpment since 1975. I tried for months to get the government to step in and stop that, but it is going ahead and I think that's really unfortunate. The site includes the headwaters of two critical coldwater fisheries and all kinds of other provincially significant wetlands and woodlands.

Then there's the Dufferin Aggregates Milton expansion. This is going to create a hole in the UNESCO biosphere. This site contains many provincially significant wetlands, the headwaters of Sixteen Mile Creek, as well as the nationally threatened Jefferson salamander.

I also want to bring up another point here, and that's the aggregates—I've been talking about that for some time—and the proposed provincial policy statement, which is another key component to curbing sprawl. Their interests have trumped other interests in this case. So that is a major concern.

I pointed out before King City, the big pipe. You've gone ahead with that: building a pipe and laying down the infrastructure for sprawl into the heart of the greenbelt, on to prime agricultural land located on the moraine, which is also land at the headwaters of the Humber River, a source of GTA drinking water.

I note that the city of Toronto passed a very nice resolution supporting the government's initiatives today, but let me point out to you that they made it very clear, and I'm going to read it to you quickly, "that the city of Toronto support, as part of the greenbelt, the absolute protection of the headwaters areas affecting Toronto's rivers, even if such headwaters areas are outside of the greenbelt study area...." That is a big problem, and that's going to be a problem for the city of Toronto in terms of supporting this.

1420

There are others. There's Boyd Park-Pine Valley, which is only partially protected.

So it's apparent that more work needs to be done on this. I'm committed to doing it. I'm committed to going to committee and working with the people who come forward, and with the government, to make amendments to this act to fill in the big holes that still exist.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to send the congratulations of this House to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the people of Boston for their amazing historical achievement yesterday in winning the World Series for the first time in 86 years. I move that we give unanimous consent to send congratulations to the people of Massachusetts and the city of Boston for winning the World Series.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Eglinton-Lawrence seeks unanimous consent. Is it agreed? I'm hearing some noes.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery Representative Paul Luebke from the North Carolina House of Representatives. Please join me in welcoming our guest.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. You've been in office for more than a year, and in that time you've done nothing to keep your promises when it comes to hospitals. You promised you would open 1,600 new hospital beds, provide a health care system that would give us all the care we need when we need it, reduce wait times and provide hospitals with multi-year funding that would meet their needs.

We know now that those promises aren't worth the paper they're written on. Hospitals are now warning about bed closures and cutting services. The OHA has said emergency rooms, obstetrics and arthritic clinics, to name a few, are at risk.

You've already been caught playing fast and loose with the facts about your Liberal health tax. I want to give you another opportunity to explain why people are paying more for health care and getting less from hospitals in their communities.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's only the honourable member opposite who can draw the conclusion that investing nearly \$1 billion in our hospitals, as a government, is getting less. What would be getting less would be if the people of Ontario had that party still in government. They promised \$700 million less for Ontario hospitals this year than we're providing.

Contrary to what the honourable member says, we're at the earliest stages of working through a process with all Ontario hospitals. In some cases, it could take up to 18 months. We've outlined a seven-step process with our hospitals to work through the challenges, focusing first and foremost on making sure we don't spend any extra dollar in this province on costs related to administration. It is prudent in the interests of the people of Ontario to make sure we dedicate every precious penny available to patient services. That is what we're doing as a government.

Mr Runciman: I rhymed off a number of promises that are not being met, and indeed the minister declined

to answer the question I posed at the end of my comments.

Minister, there's evidence from across Ontario that your rhetoric doesn't match or jibe with reality. London Health Sciences Centre is facing a massive deficit of at least \$35 million; Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, a deficit of \$4 million; the Hospital for Sick Children is facing a deficit of more than \$45 million; St Joe's in London, \$20 million; Cambridge Memorial is cutting 18 programs; the Sault Area Hospital is cutting 75 jobs; Campbellford Memorial is closing 21 beds and cutting 19 jobs; the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance is closing 47 beds.

You promised Ontario's hospitals would be better. You used that as a rationale for breaking your key campaign promise by introducing your Liberal health tax. What will you do to ensure that hospitals don't have to cut any further services?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The fact of the matter is that whatever might be predicted or projected out there by the information of the honourable member is not the fact and circumstance that is occurring in Ontario hospitals today. Hospitals across the province—50 of them so far—are already in balance, and we work with the others every single day to bring them to that circumstance.

The commitment this government made in response to the very direct request from Ontario hospitals was to take the necessary time, to balance over a two-year period, if necessary. It's based on a pretty simple premise. We believe it's incredibly important that we create a system of health care in our province that lives within available resources on an annual basis. The culture that party created of running up a deficit and having it dealt with in the final months of the year is not a healthy culture for health care. While we work with our hospitals and make these investments that I outlined previously, we've also made significant community-based investments, which I'll be very happy to profile to the honourable member in the supplementary.

Mr Runciman: I think the culture that existed with the former government was much healthier than the culture of fear that has now been imposed upon the hospital sector.

You don't have to look beyond the Premier's own backyard, his hometown, for evidence of the McGuinty approach to hospitals. Ottawa hospitals are facing a funding shortfall of \$83.8 million just this year. You've provided the Ottawa Hospital with a 1.8% funding increase over last year. CHEO is facing a \$4-million deficit. The Queensway Carleton received only 0.6% in operating funding. Hospitals aren't asking for a bailout; they're asking for the funding they need to deliver high-quality patient care, as you promised. Minister, when will you make good on your promise of adequate funding for Ontario's hospitals?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I always find it interesting when the honourable member, who has earned the nomenclature "mad dog," likes to raise instances of fear. I also find it interesting that the honourable member was part of a government, in relation to the Ottawa com-

munity, that sought to close the Montfort Hospital and failed to adequately offer protection for the cardiac program at CHEO. We stand behind those programs. We're putting in a new MRI at Montfort as evidence of our commitment to Ontario hospitals.

The facts remain that we're investing \$700 million more than that party promised for Ontario hospitals this year and, in addition, we're making unprecedented investments in community services, to help divert traffic from our hospitals and free them to do the things that only they can do. That means unprecedented investments in home care, long-term care, the first investments in community-based mental health care in a long time and a very significant approach to primary care that will again see Ontarians being served in their communities, as close to home as possible.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the Premier regarding your 2003 supplemental agreement to the Oak Ridges moraine land exchange and the direct negotiations that took place with developers under your leadership.

During the estimates committee on October 20, 2004, your Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing revealed that at some point between election day and the swearing in of the ministers on October 23, members of the Premier's office directly negotiated with the land developers involved with the land swap. In the original process, respected non-partisan individuals like Ron Vrancart and David Crombie led that negotiation process. Premier, why did you send in political staff to directly negotiate with developers instead of using experienced negotiators in this process?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I thank the member opposite for the question. I think what really counts in all of this is the ultimate opinion rendered by the fairness commissioner, who also happens to be the civil service Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Lloyd Houlden, who looked at the entire North Pickering land exchange involving Oak Ridges moraine lands and lands in North Pickering, an independent third party neutral. When offering his opinion as fairness commissioner, he said:

"I am pleased to report, with reference to the agreement respecting the land exchange, as follows:

"(a) The process used to reach agreement was fair and appropriate; and

"(b) The agreement constitutes a fair and reasonable outcome from the perspective of the taxpayers of Ontario."

I think that ends the matter.

1430

Mr Hudak: I think we've seen this played by the Premier before—a diversion. Premier, I asked you a very specific question about the negotiations entered into directly by members of the Premier's office with the developers in the Richmond Hill area. When pressed, the

Minister of Municipal Affairs told the standing committee on estimates that the lead in this was David MacNaughton, your principal secretary. You had at your disposal the civil service and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You had the likes of Mr Crombie or Mr Vrancart at your disposal. Instead, you chose to send in the principal secretary, the top dog in the Premier's political staff.

Premier, could you inform the House what particular skills in negotiation and land appraisal, environmental analysis and experience in the development industry Mr MacNaughton had to make him a superior choice to the civil service or the existing negotiators?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not exactly sure what the member opposite has against a fair and reasonable outcome, as determined by the fairness commissioner. Maybe I'll make reference to some other parts of the opinion rendered by the fairness commissioner.

Just in passing, he says, "This represents a significant advantage for the province." He says that "the agreement suggests a significant saving for Ontario taxpayers." He says that "in this regard will provide Ontario taxpayers with a number of important benefits." He says, "The approach used by the ... negotiating team" was "prudent." He refers to the "benefit that the taxpayers of Ontario" will "enjoy from the agreement," and again his final opinion:

"(a) The process used to reach the agreement was fair and appropriate; and

"(b) The agreement constitutes a fair and reasonable outcome from the perspective of the taxpayers of Ontario."

Mr Hudak: With respect to the Premier, you can answer these questions in the assembly or you can answer them in the hallway, but you're going to have to answer these questions.

You referred to the fairness commissioner. Can the Premier say that Mr MacNaughton went through the conflict-of-interest test? Did he go through the declaration of assets that everybody else involved in this process did? Can the Premier guarantee that to us today? Secondly, when I asked the assistant deputy minister of municipal affairs at the estimates committee what role the ministry played in this land negotiation of the additional 47 acres, she replied, "There was no involvement of myself or my staff in this process."

Premier, why was the civil service banned from these negotiations, with Mr MacNaughton's direct negotiations? In light of your Minister of Municipal Affairs' revelations to the estimates committee, will you have the Provincial Auditor go through Mr MacNaughton's deal and table the results with the Ontario Legislature?

Hon Mr McGuinty: If there was something here, then I could deal with it, but there is nothing here.

Just for purposes of information, so that the member understands and the members opposite know what we do, prior to taking office I did something that I don't think has ever been done before. I asked every single member of my senior staff to undergo an integrity screening. The

team that undertook that screening process included lawyers, former cabinet ministers and even a retired High Court judge. Beyond that, and this is something with which the members opposite would be completely unfamiliar, members of my staff who had active outside business interests were required to place those in blind trusts. They have done so, Speaker, and I'm pleased to report this to you and to the members opposite.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, last spring, after you told the people of Ontario that your new health premium would be used only for health care, we learned that \$200 million was in fact funding sewers. Two weeks ago, we learned that you are continuing the disgraceful practice of the former Conservative government by pocketing dedicated federal hepatitis C funding that was supposed to be used to enhance hepatitis C health services.

Now we learn from the Ontario Association of Radiologists that the \$380 million you have received from the federal government's diagnostic medical equipment fund last year and this year has not been spent on the purchase of new MRIs and CAT scans.

Premier, patients in some communities in Ontario are waiting up to 72 weeks—a year and a half—for MRIs and CAT scans that are desperately needed. Can you tell us where the dedicated federal money for diagnostic medical equipment went?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the member seeks to do the same on this issue, I suppose, as he has convinced himself was the case with hepatitis C, except in the case of hepatitis C, he was wrong constantly, and he's wrong on the diagnostic medical equipment fund as well.

On hepatitis C, Ontario has acted in the same fashion as the province of Manitoba, in the same fashion as the province of Saskatchewan, something that both of those health ministers would be happy to confirm for him, because I spoke to them about it in Vancouver.

On the issue of the diagnostic medical equipment fund, it is the interpretation of a few that this was about funding to provide for new equipment only in the form of MRIs and CAT scans, except that this, apparently, is something that's shared by the honourable member. Every penny of those funds is spent as intended—the federal government will confirm that—and it is to enhance the quality of medical equipment in hospitals all across the province. I'm very pleased to say that on our watch, we made sure that every hospital—and especially those smallest hospitals received a disproportionate share of these funds.

Mr Hampton: This was the 2003 federal-provincial health care accord, where the provincial Premiers and the federal Prime Minister got together and created not a hospital equipment fund, not an equipment fund for

something else. It's very clear. It is the diagnostic medical equipment fund, and MRIs and CAT scans are specifically mentioned.

Now, the Ontario radiologists' association, in their report, says that an incredible 94% of patients in Ontario who need an MRI are waiting longer than is medically appropriate; 89% of patients who need a CAT scan are now waiting longer than is medically appropriate.

Given these appalling numbers, why have you failed to invest the \$380 million of this dedicated federal health care fund in the MRIs and CAT scans for which it was intended?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member continues to misinform. The fact of the matter is—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Well, sometimes in this place, you've got to call something what it is. This is a stream of misinformation on the part of the honourable member, and it's unfortunate. The fact of the matter is that the federal government will continue to support the position of the government of Ontario, which is that we are—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): You used some unparliamentary language. Could you withdraw that, please?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I will. The member continues to use—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Well, I haven't heard it.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I said yes, I withdraw it.

The member continues to portray this information in a fashion which I believe is inaccurate based on the facts. The facts have been established. We are in compliance on this matter with the federal government.

But, importantly, I will repeat that medical equipment, which was the intent of this fund, exists, of course, in all of our hospitals. Our government has acted in a fashion which is designed to make sure that all hospitals across the province of Ontario, from the smallest hospital in Terrace Bay to the largest hospital in downtown Toronto, have been given a proportionate share—and in the case of small hospitals, a larger share—to make sure that they upgrade the quality of their medical equipment.

Mr Hampton: What you're simply doing is using a plethora of words to say that you pocketed the money, that the money didn't go for CAT scans, it didn't go for MRIs. This coming year, in 2005, the amount of money under the federal medical diagnostic equipment fund will grow to \$570 million, which you will have pocketed. Meanwhile, 72% of Ontario patients waiting for ultrasounds are waiting longer than is medically appropriate. This is unacceptable. What's more, this is what the Premier, Mr McGuinty, used to criticize the Conservatives for. He used to say, "Here is federal money dedicated for this health fund, and it's being misused."

You've got the money, Minister. The federal government gave it to you. When are you going to stop misusing it?

1440

Hon Mr Smitherman: I say to the honourable member, when are you going to stop misusing information?

Because the fact of the matter is that's what you're doing. You say we pocketed it. It will be interesting, then, when you get a letter from the hospitals in Fort Frances, Dryden, Sioux Lookout or Kenora that have their share from 2003-04. Because what we did was we made sure that every single hospital in the province of Ontario received a proportionate share of those funds.

Further, on the issue of MRIs, the Premier and I recently had the opportunity, with the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, to attend at Queensway Carleton, where our government has moved forward and funded nine new MRI services in one fell swoop.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, you promised them, and we paid for them. That is the difference. We've invested the resources of the people of the province of Ontario behind their priorities because we're committed to making improvements.

What is the net effect of the investments that we've made to date in MRIs? A 10% expansion of our capacities, more new machines and more hours at existing machines. On the issue of diagnostics, we have more to do, and I say to the honourable member, stay tuned.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Premier, who doesn't want to answer these questions, yes, I know that you and the Minister of Health announced nine MRIs and CAT scans. These are exactly the nine that were announced by the Conservatives. You're simply following the Conservative pattern again: announce, reannounce and reannounce. In fact, these were already previously announced by the Conservatives. I'm talking about the federal-provincial dedicated medical diagnostic fund.

The reality is that the waiting lists are growing longer. Seventy five per cent of radiologists said waiting lists will increase over the next year. And now we have a full-blown crisis in Ottawa, where there is a 35-week waiting list for MRIs, with an additional 11,000 patients who aren't on the waiting list. They've closed the waiting list.

Premier, you call yourself a health care government, but you've created a crisis in diagnostic testing, when all the while there is dedicated federal money there to help do the job. When are you going to stop using this money and put it toward the CAT scans, MRIs and ultrasounds for which it was intended?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Smitherman: To the honourable member: In 2003-04, we allocated every penny of the federal diagnostic medical equipment fund to Ontario hospitals. Every Ontario hospital received a proportionate share, and the smallest hospitals in the province of Ontario received a disproportionately large share.

With respect to the challenges of MRI and diagnostic services in the Ottawa community, I think the honourable member helps make a very important point for us. We recognized that Ottawa stood out as an area that was standing out, frankly, in a very negative way from this standpoint. That's why we did what we've done: not just announced, but funded the operation of an MRI at

Queensway Carleton Hospital that had been spoken about for two or three years by the previous government. It's up and operational. We're moving forward with a second new MRI in the Ottawa community, at Montfort Hospital, exactly because we are a government that is responsive to the challenges and needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health would know that those MRIs were approved in November 2002. You're trying to engage in the same game that the former Conservatives engaged in.

But it's not just Ottawa, and it's not just eastern Ontario. The Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie has a 51-week waiting list for MRIs, while St Joseph's Hospital in London has a 38-week waiting list. The shame of it is that you pocketed that federal money instead of using it for the MRIs and CAT scans for which it was intended.

The Ontario Association of Radiologists has put forward a three-year plan that calls for the purchase of 35 new scanners and 65 new MRIs. It calls for this dedicated federal money to be used for the purposes that it was intended for.

My question to the Premier is, are you going to use this money in the intended way, or are you going to continue to misuse dedicated federal health care funding?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We're going to continue to move forward in a fashion that is consistent with the way the money was intended, and the way the money was intended was to enhance the quality of equipment across the broad range of services that are provided in Ontario's hospitals. That's the way we made those investments last year, and it is the way we will continue to move forward.

But the heart of our plan includes a very significant expansion of our capacity around diagnostics. I agree with the honourable member that there are challenges out there, and that's why we, as a government, recently made an announcement that adds 10% capacity to our MRI services in the province, a very significant advance.

I agree that some of these MRIs are the same ones that have been talked about for a long time, and I'm very pleased to say that we are the government that moved it from the talking phase, which is what they're rather good at, to the action phase. This means that across the province today there's more access to MRIs—a 10% increase over a period of about a year—which stands as a very strong example to Ontarians that we will not stand and look at these long lines; rather, we will take action to address them.

Mr Hampton: The Premier promised, "Choose change." Let's count it up. We have the McGuinty government doing what the Conservative government used to do; that is, announce and reannounce. We have the McGuinty government doing what the Conservative government used to do, which is to take dedicated federal health care funding and pocket it or use it for purposes that were not part of the federal-provincial accord. Where's the change?

Here's the change: People are waiting longer and longer in Ontario for CAT scans and MRIs. People are waiting long past what is medically advisable.

It's obvious that your plan isn't working. It's obvious that it looks almost identical to the Conservative government plan. When are people going to see the "Choose change"? When are people going to see dedicated federal health care funding used for the CAT scans and the MRIs it was intended to be used for?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member likes to repeat the same point. He was wrong from the get-go on it, and he's wrong now. We've used these funds in an appropriate fashion. Every Ontario hospital, including all those in his riding, are the beneficiaries, and he'll be receiving those letters.

Let me take the opportunity to talk about the things we have done: 2,400 additional new full-time opportunities for nurses; 21,000 people in our province receiving more home care this year; 2,000 people being driven to front-line work in our long-term-care facilities to assist those who have some of the highest needs in our province; nine new MRIs, three repatriated from private sector work, with more hours, providing more services to people in those communities; \$469 million this year targeted at our hospitals on top of \$385 million after we first arrived; free vaccines for kids for the first time; and working very hard to enhance the quality of public health. I might add that in the last year of their government, there was a cut of \$163.7 million to community and public health services.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier. You seemed to imply that I question Mr MacNaughton's integrity. I do not; I don't know him from Adam. But I am questioning your judgment and your decision-making in this matter.

I posed three very serious questions, none of which you answered: Why was Mr MacNaughton, your top political adviser and principal secretary, chosen to enter direct negotiations with the developers; why were experienced civil servants totally shut out of this process; and did Mr MacNaughton go through the regular conflict-of-interest and declaration-of-assets procedures with the fairness commissioner?

Premier, you dodged those three questions. Let me ask you one straight: Your Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing revealed that negotiations transpired between October 2, election day, and October 23, the swearing-in day of cabinet in 2003. Is your minister's memory accurate?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I can appreciate why the member opposite enjoys this particular environment and indulging in innuendo and allegations. But if he listens this time, he will actually hear the answer.

I was saying that every single member of our senior staff had to undergo an integrity screening process. The team that undertook that screening process included lawyers, former cabinet ministers and even a retired high court judge. I also said that members of my staff who had active outside business interests were required to place

those in blind trusts, and if there were any involved, then they have done so. I've also made reference three times over to the opinion rendered by the fairness commissioner, an individual who, unlike the member opposite, is not partisan; he is independent and an objective third party. It is his considered opinion that this matter was dealt with in a way, as I said, to repeat, "The process used to reach the agreement was fair and appropriate, and the agreement" itself "constitutes a fair and reasonable outcome from the perspective of the taxpayers of Ontario."

1450

Mr Hudak: Premier, we have serious questions about the process for negotiations, how they took place, why you chose your principal secretary and top political adviser, Mr MacNaughton, to enter into direct negotiations with the landowners. We also have a question about your personal credibility. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs said that negotiations transpired between October 2 and October 23, 2003. On October 17, you told the Toronto Star that you were going to stop all 6,600 houses in the Oak Ridges moraine. On October 20, to the Hamilton Spectator, you repeated that claim.

This does not add up. Your municipal affairs minister says that your principal secretary was in negotiations for a land swap while you were out there saying you were going to stop all of the houses. You were working on a secret deal, but publicly you were saying just the opposite. Why do you have any credibility on this issue?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the member opposite would want to engage in some distraction.

Here are the facts: We worked as hard as we could to repair the mess that they left with respect to development on the Oak Ridges moraine. I can tell you something further. I am proud today to lead a government that is establishing in perpetuity green space for the benefit of our kids, their kids and the kids after that to the tune of 1.8 million acres, just as large as Prince Edward Island. That demonstrates, in no uncertain terms, our commitment to protecting green space in Ontario.

FUNDRAISING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Before the election, you promised to fully disclose donations in real time. Remember that? A year has passed and you are still hiding the names of people and corporations paying big bucks to golf and dine with you and your cabinet ministers. Who's donating to the Liberals? It's a bigger mystery than how they get the caramel inside the Caramilk bar. Who knows?

On Wednesday, you're hosting a \$4,000-a-table fundraiser in Ottawa. Everyone who has to attend has to fill in this form. So I ask you, will you fax all these completed forms to Ontario's chief electoral officer by dinnertime Wednesday and disclose your donors, or is this just another broken Liberal promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The NDP have always been a

little bit holier-than-thou when it came to fundraising. I'm sure that the honourable member opposite would be interested in learning that there's a job posting on the Web right now, posted on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party seeking and advertising for a major donor ask coordinator. Not a volunteer fundraiser, not somebody who's looking for \$25, \$50 and \$75 donations, but they're advertising for a major donor ask coordinator. I just thought that we should make it known to the world at large that it turns out that the NDP are also interested in collecting contributions of a significant size.

Ms Churley: It's still a mystery who is going to be donating \$4,000. What has that got to do with your promise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I'm having difficulty hearing you. Order. It's hard to get the government side to quiet down.

Could you put your supplementary, member for Toronto-Danforth?

Ms Churley: I'm happy to let people know in real time, any time, how much I donate to my party.

Seriously, Mr Premier, it sounds like you are more familiar with shredders than fax machines, because you've been breaking this promise all year long. In August, two days before accepting bids on power projects, Dwight Duncan charged energy companies up to \$5,000 to golf with him. Two weeks later, you charged high rollers big bucks to golf with you at a Dalton McGuinty golf classic. In September, people in Simcoe county paid top dollars for a boat cruise with George Smitherman. In all three cases you were asked to disclose the donors and in all three cases you said no.

Premier, Ontarians deserve to know whom you are selling access to. I'm going to ask you again. You made a promise. Will you keep it? Will you disclose the donors attending your Ottawa dinner by dinnertime Wednesday or will this be another broken Liberal promise?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the member opposite may be interested in learning that when he was seeking the leadership of his party, the single largest donation Howard Hampton accepted was \$750, from the MDS Health Group. I take it that he is now shilling for private health care in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the third party seems to be quite excited about this.

Premier.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I thought the leader of the third party was about to burst into flame, so I thought I'd better stop.

To be serious about the matter, I'm going to make an offer to the leader of the third party and to the leader of the official opposition. If you are prepared to disclose the contributions you are making real-time, then so are we. We'll get our people to sit down and we'll talk together. I know the leader of the official opposition is campaigning for funds on a full-time basis. If they're prepared to go there, then we're prepared to go there right away.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Education. Earlier this month in Thunder Bay, you met with the Lakehead District School Board to discuss their recommendations regarding proposed school closures, and particularly their intention at that time to make a final decision on these closures by November 30 this year. At that meeting, you indicated to the board that new provincial educational initiatives were forthcoming, specifically a revised funding formula which could impact their recommendations, and you asked them to at least push back their deadline until you were able to release that information to all boards across the province.

As you know, this past Tuesday evening at the first public meeting since their discussions with you, the board voted to push back their deadline to make a final decision until January 25 of next year. I know that everyone affected by these potential closures, particularly rural residents, will want to know your reaction to the board's change of heart. More specifically, may I ask you whether this additional time will be enough for you to bring out your new funding formula, and for the board to assess the impact of our government's new approach to funding education in the province, and particularly in the north?

1500

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): As many members of this House are aware, there was a premium put on closing schools in this province by the previous government, by rules they had that actually nominated properties to the Ontario Realty Corp and that had a lot of strange aspects to them. We counselled the boards a year ago that there were going to be new rules forthcoming that would put students' interests first and that wouldn't treat our school buildings in our communities as pieces of real estate, but rather as learning centres and would evaluate them accordingly.

We've made progress with that. We have declared the end of November as the date we would need to bring together the various elements of a real, considered, long-term planning strategy, which is the only way we should look at our school buildings and properties bought and paid for by the taxpayers.

I say to the member opposite, who has had an abiding interest in making sure his community benefits from all the things this government is doing in education, that this will, I believe, allow that community to make a proper assessment in time. It is a good idea that they have put it off for at least 60 days. That consideration is necessary because the people and the students of Lakehead should benefit just as much as the students anywhere else in the province.

Mr Gravelle: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate it. There is a great deal of anxiety, as you know, surrounding the board's determination to make a decision affecting so many schools, particularly those in our rural areas. I think it's probably also fair to say that the board itself is dealing with a difficult challenge as a

result of dramatically declining enrolment in our schools. While it clearly makes sense for the board to at least wait until all the funding information is available from Queen's Park and from you, the question remains as to what impact a new formula will have on the board's final decision.

Minister, my supplementary to you is, can we expect that the new formula and other initiatives you will be bringing forward will allow the board to close fewer schools than presently recommended?

Hon Mr Kennedy: While the ministry and the sector, which we involved in all our important decisions, have not yet concluded, it is clear that the answer is yes, that there will be more schools open than the board predicted. Using the formulas of the previous government, they talked about closing 19 out of 37 schools. Just our class size commitments alone, which have already started this year to reduce class size in the primary years, mean 60 more classrooms than they anticipated. That's four additional schools right there. They also have to take into account the number of 16- and 17-year-olds we are repatriating through our program to reduce high school dropouts.

We're also going to be rearranging some of the formulas that have to do with the opening of new schools. By this time next year, we're investing something in the order of \$2 billion to make sure that school buildings can come up to the level of respect we want our students to have for their education.

Those are all factors, just to name a few, that they have not taken into account and that will invariably affect the outcome very positively for the residents and students of Thunder Bay and the Lakehead.

HYDRO PROJECT

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. I'm asking this question on behalf of 530 children, their parents and the staff of St Monica Catholic Elementary School in York region. Minister, you have repeatedly washed your hands of any responsibility for the health and safety of those children and the staff in that school when confronted with the potential health risks that would result from a Hydro One plan to increase the voltage capacity through that hydro corridor, which is immediately adjacent to this school.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified EMF as possibly carcinogenic. A recent UK survey, based on 33 years of study on 35,000 children diagnosed with cancer, found that young children living within 100 metres of high voltage power lines have twice the risk of developing leukemia.

Minister, why are you glibly simply deflecting any appeals to you and your office, saying it's not your responsibility? You've referred it to the Minister of Energy. How can you in good conscience simply wash your hands of this threat to the health and safety of the children and the staff in that school?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This is of course a decision of the Hydro One board. The decision to take action is based on IMO forecasts, in consultation with local distribution companies, to meet growing demands for electricity in the area. Hydro One has considered a variety of options. It undertook a consultation process and has decided to go forward with this proposal. Hydro One has also stated they will not seek approval to construct unless requested by York region.

Comments and concerns about the draft environmental studies report on this proposal, which was posted on October 21—there's a 30-day public review period, following which Hydro One will decide whether to file the environmental studies report with the Minister of the Environment.

I should state that, once this process is done, the community can request, as I understand it, a bump up to a full environmental assessment to assess and make determinations with respect to these kinds of issues.

Mr Klees: Minister, World Health Organization studies have linked EMF to childhood leukemia. Dr Helena Jacek, York region's medical officer of health, is quoted as saying, "They"—the World Health Organization—"state that there was an above average incidence of leukemia in children and did relate it to a specific dose. It seems the last place you want to put high voltage transmission lines is in a residential area."

Minister, you were prepared to involve yourself in the vending machines of our schools, supposedly for the health and safety of our kids. You're the one who set yourself up as the official parent to monitor the lunchboxes of kids in this province, but you are not willing to stand and advocate on behalf of children who are threatened, whose lives are threatened as a result of this proposed plan.

I'm asking you today, will you meet with the parents of this school and agree to personally, as minister, intervene in the EA process to advocate for the children and the staff of this school?

Hon Mr Duncan: There is a process that's laid out with an appeal available to the Ministry of the Environment with respect to the environmental assessment. I can tell you, it would be inappropriate for any minister of the crown to interfere in this type of process that could be subject to a full environmental assessment. The Integrity Commissioner has ruled on numerous occasions about the inappropriateness of that.

Suffice to say, there are public consultations set up in Aurora, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Unionville, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Woodbridge. Public information sessions are also being held by Hydro One in Aurora and Richmond Hill. The town of Newmarket will also hold its own public information session. If public concerns cannot be addressed by Hydro One, concerned stakeholders—and that could involve parents, citizens' groups, York region itself, Dr Jacek, who we have enormous respect for—have the option to bump up or apply for a bump up of the environmental assessment to study these types of issues.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to ask for a late show from this minister. He should have answered that question.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): As you know, the appropriate papers have to be filed for that late show.

INSURANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Premier. Your government is simply not protecting ordinary Ontarians from special kickbacks on their home and auto insurance. Yesterday, your minister said there's no evidence—none—that Ontario insurance brokers are pocketing contingency commissions. These commissions are the secret bonuses that go to a broker for steering lucrative business to a given company.

Today we learn that contingency commissions are very much alive and well here in the province of Ontario. CTV News reports brokers paid \$359 million across Canada last year. Will you ban the scam and protect drivers, or are you going to let big insurance and insurance brokers continue to gouge and rip off homeowners and drivers?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Finance spoke to this yesterday. I know there's a real concern here. He has asked the regulator of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to look into this business of commissions and contingent payments. He has also asked the industry to enter into a voluntary arrangement to disclose base commissions and whether or not there were any contingent commissions involved in their work as brokers.

I also want to remind my colleague opposite that they had five years to do something to protect consumers and increase transparency, and they chose to do nothing. We have directed—"asked" I think is the appropriate verb—the regulator—I'm talking about the regulator—to look into the business of commissions and contingent payments. We'll be watching the industry closely to ensure that consumers' needs are being met. After we get a report from the regulator on their practices, if necessary, we may be required to take further action.

Mr Kormos: This regulator is the same regulator that's been asleep at the wheel, allowing these big insurance companies to rip off drivers and homeowners with these kickback schemes over the course of years now, and you're telling them to investigate themselves?

1510

I find little comfort in your proposal. Last year, you said you'd work with your insurance friends and cut insurance rates by 20%. Well, that didn't happen. Now you claim you're going to work with your insurance company friends to protect consumers. Saying that big insurance is going to protect consumers is like calling King Kong the New York protection monster.

Minister, will you please refer this matter to a legislative committee for examination to determine how much brokers have ripped off premium payers and to make

recommendations for compensation to those auto and homeowner premium payers for all monies paid in these ripoff contingency commissions?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's always interesting to receive criticism from the champion of public auto insurance. After all those years, we still don't have it. It's the equivalent of Waiting for Godot, apparently, in the province of Ontario.

Here's what Jim Hall had to say in commenting on the steps we've taken in Ontario—Jim Hall is the NDP-appointed insurance regulator in Saskatchewan. He also happens to be the chair of the Canadian Council of Insurance Regulators. With respect to the steps taken by my finance minister late yesterday, he said, "I think it's a great first step." That's the NDP-appointed regulator in Saskatchewan.

Now, it may not be enough for the champions of public auto insurance who, on their watch, did nothing, but I think it's a prudent and responsible approach, taken in keeping with the desires of the people of Ontario.

GREENBELT

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Our government has made a historic commitment to establishing a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe. Less than one year ago, our government introduced legislation that imposed a one-year moratorium on new urban development on both rural and agricultural lands within the greenbelt study area. My constituents, especially my young constituents, are asking me how this government plans to preserve land, not only to grow food but to improve the quality of life and clean the air they breathe.

Minister, would you please inform the children of my constituents as to what progress our government has made in preserving their green space?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for his question. Today is indeed a great day for the people of Ontario. We are bringing an additional one million acres into protection. We are going to protect agricultural lands, and we're going to protect lands that are environmentally sensitive. Our plan will build a legacy for children by stopping the sprawl on the most precious specialty crop lands in the Holland Marsh and the Niagara tender fruit lands and grape lands area that grow the foods we eat; by protecting watersheds, streams and rivers that provide clean drinking water; by providing trails, parklands and open spaces that we need to support sports, tourism and recreation; and by setting strict limits on where communities can and cannot expand their urban boundaries.

Mr Flynn: I have a supplementary question to the minister. We know that the call for a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe has been a long time coming, and we're doing something about it. Even the president of the

Urban Development Institute stated in December 2003, "A greenbelt is not something that we are averse to."

A greenbelt is something the public has wanted and been asking of governments for years. How do the people provide input to the vision of a permanent greenbelt?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: As the member knows, the draft greenbelt plan has been guided by the input of literally hundreds of people, thousands of e-mails, at least a thousand other written submissions and the advice of more than 60 stakeholder groups.

We look forward to hearing from the public over the next 45 days while we consult on this draft plan by holding a series of town hall meetings—there are at least 10 of them scheduled within the GTA area—and by submitting e-mails and on-line questionnaires through the ministry Web site. The draft plan will also be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for public comment.

We hold in our hands the last opportunity to make a real difference to the future of Ontario, particularly central Ontario. Ontarians understand, and we understand, that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand.

CIVIL MARRIAGES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. On December 12, 2002, I had a private member's bill passed with the support of all the parties in this House. The bill would have appointed marriage commissioners in each riding across the province to perform civil marriages. What, if anything, has your government done to develop this bill?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to congratulate the honourable member for a couple of things: first of all, for his persistence on this issue. I was pleased, on September 17, just three months after the honourable member raised the issue in the House, to file a regulation under the Marriage Act, which is part of my responsibility, that authorizes municipal clerks to solemnize civil marriages. Municipal clerks are responsible citizens in our communities, and the response from the municipal sector has been very positive.

Let me just read one quote from Roger Anderson, who is the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. He said, "Municipalities see this as a positive step in providing another level of service for people in our communities."

I was pleased that we on this side of the House were able to proceed with this, because I read with interest in Hansard, on June 15, that the honourable member said the following about one of his colleagues: "I want to tell you why it wasn't done: because we had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn't have been the minister. He was the minister, and that's unfortunate." I'm sure he regrets those

comments now, he was in the doghouse for so long, but I thank the member for bringing the issue forward.

We acted on it, we moved on it, and we're very pleased to support the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in this province.

Mr Murdoch: I don't regret anything I've said, so you don't have to worry about me. It depends on what doghouse you're in. As long as I'm not in the pit bull doghouse, I'll be all right, but if I am, you guys are going to neuter me and I'll be in trouble.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): You're old enough, so it won't make any difference.

Mr Murdoch: I'm old enough, so Chudleigh says, so I'm all right.

Mr Minister, I appreciate what you've done, to a point, but unfortunately a lot of clerks are upset that this responsibility was put on them. I want to ask you, why didn't you do what the House wanted here? When the House voted on the bill, we were going to appoint marriage commissioners. People would have been appointed. You would have had the appointments over there to do this. You didn't follow what the House voted on. This is the problem. I need you to explain to us why you took the route you did and why you didn't do what the House voted on.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Contempt of the House. Contempt of the will of this Legislature.

Hon Mr Watson: I hear the interim Leader of the Opposition saying it was contempt of the Legislature, it was contempt of the people of Ontario. He didn't follow the procedure either.

I want to say that the clerks of the municipalities are supportive. Let me read from the president of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers: "Municipal clerks welcome this opportunity to expand their role in the marriage process and provide a more complete service to those seeking a civil marriage." This was a much more efficient, quicker fashion to get this service out and about.

I'd encourage the honourable member, who has done good work on this, to go and talk to his new leader and tell him to support Bill 70. Tell him to say no to negative-option billing. Let's stand on the side of consumers. The honourable member's a rebel within his caucus. Go and speak to your leader. After seeing the leader of the Conservative Party in a scrum yesterday, he looked like Bambi in headlights. He was frightened about talking about negative-option billing. Our government is standing side by side with consumers in Ontario.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question, in the absence of the Minister of Community and Social Services, is to the Premier. Your government promised real change for people on social assistance. To date, all that has happened is that you have promised them a 3% increase, which most of them have not seen. I

have to ask you, are they ever going to get it? Because some of those same recipients who had the good fortune to go off assistance are getting absolutely nothing.

I draw your attention to an ODSP recipient in my riding who turned 65 years of age. That's all that happened: She went from ODSP to old age security. This is a woman who has had her money frozen for 10 years and, because she turned 65, your government is going to give her absolutely nothing. Why are you proceeding in what I consider this horrible, horrible manner?

1520

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to say that we're proud of the initiatives that we have just begun to take with respect to ensuring that Ontarians who are struggling are getting more of a hand from the rest of us. In particular, I'll tell you about some of the things that we have done. We're investing \$56 million for 2,300 housing units across Ontario, 900 units right here in Toronto. We've increased the minimum wage for the first time in eight years. We're investing \$10 million in a brand new rent bank. We now have a 1.5% guideline increase for 2005, the lowest in the history of rent regulation in Ontario. We've had a 3% increase for homeless shelters. We've had a 3% increase for disability and social assistance. I say this proudly because we've only been on the job for one year.

Mr Prue: Mr Premier, if I have ever heard a non-answer, that had to have been it. This is a woman who has been on ODSP for 10 years, who had the temerity to turn 65, and now you're not giving her the 3% increase that she's entitled to. This is all because you inherited a computer system, I guess, that didn't work, that couldn't calculate a 3% increase. Because you inherited that system, you are now saying that this woman is not entitled to anything. She's not entitled to the 3% that every ODSP recipient in this province will eventually get.

She still has to feed herself, she still has to pay the rent, she still has to do a thousand other things that all of us have to do, and she's in poverty. She's looking forward to that \$100, or a portion of that \$100. Why should she continue to suffer because the computer did not work? Why should she suffer anything at all? Will you reverse the ministry's decision? Will you allow these people who are now no longer on ODSP because they've turned 65 to get the money that is owed to them?

Hon Mr McGuinty: That raises an important issue. I'll give it my personal undertaking. Please provide us with the specifics and we will look into it. The member raises a serious issue.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have with us in the Speaker's Gallery Eric Cunningham, former member of Provincial Parliament representing the riding of Wentworth North in the 30th, 31st and 32nd Parliaments. Please join me in welcoming him here.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my name in support.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I send this to you by page Alyscha.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario. This reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario would adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present the following petition to the people of Ontario and to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I also want to quickly recognize Karen Stern, the executive director of Heart Niagara, Don Gibson, John Carter and Anita Fiorentino, who are here on behalf of this petition. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest heart failure readmission rates in Ontario, has the third-highest post-heart-attack one-year death rate, and is 25% higher than the Ontario average for ischemic heart disease deaths; and

"Whereas in fiscal year 2002-03, Niagara region residents had 1,230 admissions to the hospital for heart failure, 1,150 patients admitted to hospital for acute heart attacks, 862 admissions to hospital for ischemic heart disease, 93 admissions to hospital for cardiomyopathy, a repatriation population of 458 post-angioplasty patients,

341 admissions to out-of-region hospitals for coronary artery disease, 328 post-coronary artery bypass patients, 92 heart valve replacement patients and three heart transplants; and

"Whereas all the above-mentioned 4,503 heart patients are eligible for cardiac rehab in Niagara, which translates to 1,500 new patients who would access Niagara cardiac rehabilitation services every year; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara, Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient, but relies on funding through donations and special events;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Niagara, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other communities, and made comprehensive and accessible."

The petition contains 18,948 signatures. I'm pleased to present it to the House. As well, it has 2,213 letters of support.

1530

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

Of course, I agree with this petition, and would remind people that there's a press conference on this subject at the Banting homestead tomorrow at 4 o'clock.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of residents of the Lisgar area of Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak-period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As one of those residents, I agree with this petition and ask Geneva to carry it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition that was given to me by patients of Dr Marty Richter, a doctor of chiropractic from Oshawa. Thousands of his patients are very upset, and I'm going to read their petition into the record:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse this" reckless "decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the

best interests of the public, patients, the health care system," and the people of Ontario.

I'm pleased to endorse this on behalf of my constituents.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in" our great country of "Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm glad to add my name to this petition.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employ-

ment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

This of course has my endorsement. It comes to me from the township of Woolwich, and I will give it to the page.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I support this and affix my signature.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to be able to present two petitions today. This one here is a very popular petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I am pleased to endorse this on behalf of the people of Ontario, who already pay too much in taxes.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Oak Ridges has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning health threats to children and staff of St Monica elementary school in York region. This matter will be debated at 6 pm today.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HERITAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member who previously had the floor is not here today. I would then ask for further debate.

The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege again to stand and speak on this issue. Heritage is very near and dear to my heart, having been a municipal politician in the city of Toronto, and before that in East York. We have many fine buildings in this city, buildings well worthy of saving. I was also privileged at one time to be the first non-Toronto—that is the old city of Toronto—resident to be appointed to Heritage Toronto. This happened right after the amalgamation. I was the only one sitting around the table who was not from the old city, where the majority of the heritage properties are located. I think they looked at me with some scepticism when I sat around that table at first: "What is this guy from East York going to bring to this particular table? How is he going to influence the policies of heritage in the city of Toronto?" It was an excellent learning experience for me. I had the privilege of sitting on that board for nearly all of the five years that I was a municipal councillor in the megacity.

Heritage in Toronto is in desperate need of a boost, a shot in the arm, something I believe this bill will bring. It may shock some of the members opposite. I'm actually going to speak in favour of your bill and I'm going to say why I think you're doing, in almost all respects, exactly the right thing.

For too long in this country, we have not treated heritage and heritage properties in the way that we should. If anyone has had an opportunity to travel around the world, whether that be to Europe, to South America or to Asia, where do the tourists go when they go to those places? They don't go to the football games. They go to the museums, they go to the older parts of the cities, they

look at the heritage properties. They try to soak up the ambiance.

You can go to any kind of tropical destination. I've visited the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico several times. You can go around and you can see the palm trees and lie by the beach, but the more exciting thing is to go into the capital of Puerto Rico itself, to walk up and down the blue cobblestone streets, to see the structure of that particular city, to see the heritage of buildings that are 400 or 500 years old. That's where the history is. That's really what the heart and soul of that community is. That's what the people fight to protect.

I have to tell you that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has done an excellent job. Many places have done an excellent job. I'm very proud of what the city of Ottawa has done with some of our large heritage buildings and of what they're continuing to do in the preservation of some of the homes in close proximity to the Glebe. I'm very proud when I go to Kingston and I see what Kingston is doing with their downtown core, with the hundreds of buildings that have been designated.

But when we go to other places in Ontario—and I guess I know Toronto best. I see the heritage-designated buildings or the buildings that should receive protection, that we should be crying out to save, and then you see the wrecker's ball come in and it goes down, because somebody can make more money building a condo or changing an old building that is absolutely beautiful, architecturally important and historically magnificent. It goes down because money is to be made. The city of Toronto fights, and I think fights pretty hard, to save some of them—some members, anyway, of the city of Toronto council. But we could do so much more. This bill, to put it bluntly, will allow municipalities, politicians at the municipal level and all Ontarians to fight to save that which is important.

There was a big fight at the city of Toronto about the Concourse Building. It is one of only two art deco buildings still left standing in the downtown core. It has a magnificent mural painted by one of the Group of Seven—I think it was A.J. Casson but I could be mistaken—right inside the foyer. The building itself is architecturally unique in that it was built in that period of the 1920s and 1930s when art deco was all the rage. But in fact, the city of Toronto council voted not to preserve this building. The only thing they're going to preserve is the façade. They're going to build around it. They're going to take down a magnificent building and it will be subject to the wrecker's ball.

History does not start in the 1980s or 1990s with glass and steel towers. The history of this city, of this province and of this country is far older than that and it needs to have a focus. It needs to have a place where people can go, where people can look and where people can understand what happened.

In Toronto, you can go to the oldest building in Toronto, Scadding Cabin. It's not on the original site, but it is the oldest building. People can look to see what the first settlers actually lived in. It is a real building that has

been restored somewhat and moved from its original site. You can go back and visit the Toronto of the 1800s or 1700s. That building is important for all the world to see. Or in Toronto you can go to the oldest buildings in situ, which I'm proud to say are in East York. They are at Todmorden Mills. You can go down there and see the old mill and the brewery, you can go down into the museum and see the way life was in the late 1790s through about 1815. You can see what it was like to be a rich person on that site, because there's a magnificent house where the rich guy lived, and then there's a not-so-rich house, where an ordinary family lived, to see what life was like for them in those days.

That important little development shows people the history and wealth of our community. It was saved by the first mayor of East York, True Davidson, as a Centennial project in 1967, when it was going to be demolished as a result of some of the ravages of Hurricane Hazel some 10 years before. It stands as a testament to the importance of heritage to our community.

I am saying this bill is going to do so much more. The reason I'm saying that in part is because I had an opportunity about two years ago to meet a remarkable man from the United States, a man by the name of Anthony Tung. He has written some books on heritage and the preservation of old buildings. He said something which is fundamental and absolutely true: The most important thing a government can do in terms of heritage is to refuse to allow the buildings to be destroyed.

What is happening in Ontario is quite the opposite. This is what's happening, prior to this bill, right today. We're saying that heritage is important, we're designating it, but you, the person who owns it, can ignore us and tear it down in 90 days if you want, because all we can do is stop them for 90 days.

Anthony Tung was absolutely right. He showed us some wonderful slides at a presentation put on by the heritage board in Toronto. I wasn't a member then. I just went down as an ordinary guy. I left this building and went down there to see it. He showed how they had reconstructed Warsaw. He showed how New York City, in some of its boroughs, had rebuilt the old buildings. He showed London, he showed cities around the world and what they had done to restore their heritage. Then he started to show us how tourism went way up. People wanted to come to those cities, not to see the glass towers. People came to those cities not to gamble or to drink or go to the restaurants or watch the sports games. People came as tourists to those cities because they were world architectural sites, where you could see something that you couldn't see anywhere else, where you could see a civilization and a history and you could be part of it simply by being there. That's why I support this bill, because this bill is going to allow exactly that. It is going to prevent demolitions. It is going to give the province and, I think, the municipalities the authority to give fines of up to \$1 million for those who take possession of a heritage property and simply come and tear it down.

I watched in amazement, and some disgust, I must tell you, a developer who bought a heritage property just

outside of Toronto, and I can't remember the name of the municipality or exactly where it was. But he came in and bulldozed the whole thing before the municipal council could do a thing. They woke up on a Monday morning to find out that on the weekend a heritage property, which was the pride and joy of that municipality, had been bulldozed. What could they do? They could fine the guy a few hundred bucks, if they took him to court at all.

This legislation will allow a \$1-million fine, which will make many developers and people think twice about demolishing our heritage and our history.

I like this bill as well because it has an appeal mechanism. It is difficult for people who own a heritage property, and some would be a little reluctant to actually buy that property if they thought they couldn't modify or change it. I know they need to be modified and changed; old properties do. Some of them may have insulation that doesn't work. Some of them may have windows that are no longer in stock and you have to upgrade; you may have to put in a little bit of plastic that looks like wood to do the same job that wood used to do. You may have to do a few cosmetic things, and they're reluctant to get into this. I'm glad to see here that there is an appeal mechanism that will allow the owners of those homes an opportunity to go before the Ontario Municipal Board and ask for what needs to be done.

I am glad there's something in this bill that allows for property standards changes. Those are not present in the current act or the legislation that we have now, but I'm glad to see that there is, because even something as minor as the type of fence that surrounds a heritage property is important to preserve.

1550

Many heritage properties at one time probably had picket fences. They may have had rockeries. They may have had cedar fences. They may have had whatever was *de rigueur* in those times. They probably did not have iron fences—well, some of them had iron fences too. What they probably didn't have was Frost fences. They didn't have the kinds of architectural fencing you see today. It's important that even a little detail like that be preserved, where it is not cost-prohibitive and where it actually enhances the look of the property and the history of our province.

I'm pleased to see conservation districts, and I have to tell you that these are contentious. I went to a meeting in Beaches-East York about a week ago, and it has been suggested by some of the neighbours that they go before the city of Toronto and ask that a certain portion, some two or three streets in the Beach area, be designated as a conservation district. There were 300 people at that meeting; 300 residents of that community showed up in a local school gym and were debating fiercely whether or not they wanted a conservation district in their particular neighbourhood. There were some who said no and there were some who just as passionately said yes. Tempers flared for a little while. I think a lot of education needs to be done as to what would constitute the heritage district and whether in fact that community is the right place for one.

I leave it to that community, because conservation and heritage districts need to be decided by the people who live there. They cannot be imposed by Queen's Park, nor should they be imposed by the city of Toronto or any jurisdiction other than the people who live there. Quite frankly, if the people who live there decide that a heritage district is opportune, if they want to preserve some of the unique buildings on those particular streets in the Beach, then I think they should have that opportunity to do so. This bill will allow a much clearer enunciation of how that is to happen, and I support that.

The only problem I have with this bill is very minor and I'm going to support the bill notwithstanding that. But I ask the minister, who is here, and I thank her for being here, to look at this. People are reluctant to buy heritage properties. They are reluctant to buy them because the city, the province or someone else can come around and tell them what to do. They can say, "Heritage property—we don't want you to build on this. We don't want you to put on an addition. You can't tear it down." People have a very strong sense that what they own and what they have paid for is theirs. They are reluctant to buy heritage properties unless they know and unless they feel they have control over that property, which after all belongs to them and on which they sometimes pay a great deal of tax.

We need to do something to encourage the owners of heritage properties to keep them as heritage properties. When those heritage properties are sold, we need something that encourages people to want to go out and buy them, not for the sake of tearing them down, which all too often happens, but for the sake of buying them to refurbish them, to fix them and to keep them as close as possible to the condition and to the way they were originally built.

We need to have something that gives grants to owners of those properties who can apply for them, either at the time they own them or at the time that they are seeking to buy them, which will ensure that they understand the nature of the heritage property and that there will be some monies coming to them, because invariably it costs more money to upgrade a heritage property than to build a new one or to refurbish it with modern-day materials. There should be some form of grant that is available upon application, where people are doing really necessary and important work to maintain those properties.

In a little paper I wrote with my colleague the late Fred Gloger when I first came to this magnificent building, we called for a fund for dynamic downtowns. It involved some \$350 million, and it was to be made available so that downtown cores, especially in cities, could have heritage properties preserved and kept, and that fund could be replaced—it wasn't \$350 million every year, so I want you to breathe a little sigh of relief; it was \$350 million to start and it would be refurbished as the money was spent—in order to allow the owners of these properties to gain access to the monies. It would also encourage them to refurbish the properties.

The problem with what is happening now and what the Conservatives tried earlier is that you can say to the municipality, "We are going to encourage you to tell the owners of heritage properties to preserve them, and you, municipalities, can give them a tax cut," but the reality, as you know, is that all municipalities in this province do not have sufficient money to do this. I will tell you, they are all reluctant to grant tax cuts to heritage properties in their municipality because they desperately need the money for transit, water, sewage, education and everything else for which they are responsible. So they are not going to give that selfsame tax cut. It will fall upon the province to come up with another mechanism. Whether that mechanism is an outright grant to the municipality to pay to the person or whether it's directly to the person, who is after all an Ontario citizen, I would leave that to the regulations.

Also—and this is a very minor one, too, and I think can be done by way of regulation or by ministerial fiat in some way—I would suggest that the transition arrangements need to be tightened a little. This bill has been a long time coming before us today. It was back in April, I think, that it was originally—

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Buildings are already demolished.

Mr Prue: Yes, there are buildings that have been demolished in anticipation that this will one day pass. I'm sure a developer out there, looking at what I'm having to say with some passion, at least I hope some passion, will think, "Hey, we'd better get on and start to demolish this, because this may be coming down the pipe pretty soon."

I think this bill needs to pass, and it needs to pass quickly. But in the interim, the minister needs to do something to make sure that the developers don't run out there in a frenzy of demolition.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Third reading right now.

Mr Prue: OK. I leave that to you and your lawyers. You have far more money, far more bureaucrats and far more lawyers than I will probably ever see in my life, so I leave that, because I know it can be done. All I am asking on behalf of my support of the bill is that you fund the people who own it to keep it and, second, you make sure that in the two to three months or however long it takes to proclaim this bill into law there is not a frenzy of applications to tear buildings down. I leave it to you how it's done.

I've only got two minutes left, so I'd like to spend the last two minutes on one final aspect of the bill that I find intriguing, because I don't know whether we have ever really done enough of this in this country. That is, there is a provision in the bill that allows for the saving of marine and archaeological property. People look around and say, "Where would we have marine or archaeological preservation?" I am reminded of the epitaph of the builder of St Paul's Cathedral. I can't remember his first name; his last name was Wren. If you go there, it says something like, "If you want to see a description of me, look around you.

It is all around you." That was his description. It was St Paul's. Well, I'm saying that all of this stuff is all around us, all the time, every day; we just fail to see it. There is marine and archaeological evidence all around this city. There is tons of marine evidence around Lake Ontario. There is tons in the port lands. There's archaeological evidence just outside the city of Toronto. Even on that hotly contested land in Pickering—and it was in question period today—there is archaeological evidence of First Nations. That all needs to be protected as well. This bill will go a long way to help that.

I commend the members opposite for bringing forward the bill in its present form. I hope the minister will take my constructive criticism on two very small areas, and I would hope that all members of this House, within the next few days, at the most, will find the time to pass this bill into law and that we can save the history and heritage of this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments.

1600

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 60, the amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act, and to commend the Minister of Culture for bringing it forth and the member from the third party, from Beaches-East York, for speaking so eloquently about our history, our culture and our heritage. It's so important to preserve.

Conserving our history is really what grounds us. It's what makes us great. It always gives me great pride, when I drive by or stop at an old farmhouse, to see where we came from, what previous civilizations were like here in this great land of Ontario and Canada.

Travel around the world, and the greatest places, the greatest tourism attractions, are those that preserve their history. I know that in the great city of Mississauga it's something we are building strongly today in terms of our tourism. We've got some beautiful places with great heritage and great culture: the Port Credit area, Streetsville, Cooksville, all of the towns that now make up the city of Mississauga, 680,000 strong.

This bill will help us preserve many of the heritage buildings that exist on those sites and help Mississaugans learn about their past, their past that comes from much that was farmland. In my riding we had many apple orchards, and some of those beautiful farmhouses still do exist. Many like to drive by and stop there because they are a grounding force for the community. Really, they preserve the community and give everybody the sense of community.

This bill will do a number of things. It's going to change the designation criteria. Where in the past it was objective and transparent criteria, especially as proposed, the designation will come with stronger demolition controls.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments on the remarks by the member for Beaches-East York. I believe the name he was searching for was Sir Christopher Wren.

Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, 2004, is very much—a big part of it came from Dave Tsubouchi's Bill 124, which came from the consultations we carried out that led to that bill.

The member for Beaches-East York was talking about the possibility of funding owners who have heritage properties to help maintain more heritage properties. I agree that we have to do all we can to keep as many of those heritage properties as we possibly can, but it's not always an easy decision. I think about a situation that's going on right now in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where there's Pinelands, one of the original Muskoka lodges. Actually, our family used to own it for many years. It's an old wood frame building. It's now been sold. There are new owners that have big plans for the property. Really, the question of what to do with the old property—the new owners want to demolish that building. They've got the blessing of the township to do so.

It is a very difficult decision. I spoke with the past owners, the Revilles, and asked them, do they think they should be trying to maintain it? They said that it's just not economical with this old wood frame building that may not be safe, that could quite possibly in the future be a fire hazard. It would be quite difficult.

I think the member raises some good points. If you do want to maintain some of these properties, then I think the province will have to consider what the value of them is and how much money they want to spend trying to fund maintaining more heritage properties.

Mr Marchese: I am very thankful for the remarks made by the member for Beaches-East York, because he's covered a great deal of ground, and covered the ground that many New Democrats have spoken to and will speak to again, if needed. And that is that this government has done the right thing with respect to heritage. They've done the right thing because essentially they've listened to the heritage community.

For years people in the heritage community have been saying that cities and the province need to have the power to be able to say no to the demolition of heritage properties. This bill gives the municipalities the power to do so and allows for the minister to be able to intervene with a stop order if she or he has to.

That's an important thing, because when you think of all of our heritage buildings that have been razed to the ground, not just in Ontario but everywhere across Canada, it's shameful what we have allowed in this country. Where other countries in Europe invite tourists from all over the world to see their heritage, we in Canada and Ontario have destroyed so much of it.

Finally, we have a bill that speaks to what people have been speaking to for a long time, so of course we're happy to speak to many of the positive aspects of this bill. We're happy that you still have the power to say no to the demolition of the Concourse Building—very historical, a beautiful building; I was there when we demonstrated a couple of years ago. It remains to be seen whether you exercise that power.

There's a lot of good in this bill and a lot to reflect on about how we help individuals who need help to preserve their buildings, because it's expensive. We haven't done an adequate job, and you need to reflect on that, including reflecting on our cemeteries and how we protect them as well. In the next two minutes, I'll have an opportunity to speak about that.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): This is a really good bill, and it's an important issue. And that was a really good speech, I say to the member for Beaches-East York, a really thoughtful speech and a really important contribution to this debate.

I know that his proposals are going to be considered as the bill moves forward. This issue is one of those things where you think, "Why didn't we do this a few years ago? We've been talking about it for a long time." I'm not the only one, but I had a private bill—not a private member's bill but a private bill—that I brought on behalf of the city of Toronto a couple of years ago. It dealt with a similar—very close to this. This bill is much broader, of course, and applies across the entire province.

The inability of the municipality to deal with these issues and to deal with heritage buildings just never made any sense to me. It also didn't reflect the role that cities are to play in our province. But now, if passed, cities are going to get the power to prohibit instead of just delay. I know that councillors Michael Walker and Joe Mihevc, in the riding of St Paul's, have been active on this issue for a long time and we've talked about it for a long time. They were supportive of my private bill, as were, I should say, New Democrats as well.

I think this bill, in a very comprehensive fashion, subject to the debate we continue to have, gives the province new powers to designate and control demolition. It just never made any sense, I can say to many constituents in St Paul's. We have heritage buildings in the riding of St Paul's. From time to time we'd have a threat of demolition and there just weren't those controls or balances or powers or abilities of governments to act in the public interest. Now we've got that.

I think it's a fair process, and I look forward to more debate on this very important bill. A great speech, I say to Mr Prue.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: I would like to thank very much the members for Mississauga East, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Trinity-Spadina and the Attorney General. You all had very important things to say. I sometimes wish I had more than 20 minutes, because you've all touched on something I neglected to say and which I now have two minutes to do.

The member for Mississauga East talked about his community. I think that oftentimes when I stand here and speak, I tend to be Toronto-centric. That's the problem with growing up and living here your whole life. I do

acknowledge that Mississauga is a wonderful community, that there is—

Mr Marchese: They exist.

Mr Prue: No, they more than exist. They are vibrant and exciting, and there are historic properties. You can go out to Streetsville or Port Credit and see really old buildings. You can see communities that have been there for a long time. It is not the image that people have of Mississauga as a big sprawl. The original communities there are unique and need to be protected as well.

The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka reminded me that of course former Minister Tsubouchi, whom I had not said anything about, did some very good work on heritage. We disagreed on many things, but on heritage he was good. Even though Rosario Marchese and I stood up in the House several times and asked him about the first Parliament and it was agonizingly slow, in the end it was saved and he is to be commended for that.

1610

The member for Trinity-Spadina talked about the heritage groups, and I neglected to talk about the wonderful work they continue to do. I know they had a hand in drafting this bill. I think most fondly and most often about one person in particular, and that is Cathy Naismith, who continues to run a little heritage newspaper. It's free and it's on the Web. You should take a look at it. It's sent out monthly. Read it. It outlines all the heritage aspects of what is going on in the greater Toronto area and the efforts that are being made to save buildings. Last but not least, thanks to the Attorney General for his very kind words. In fact, most of the heritage, although not all of it by any stretch of the imagination, is in downtown cores in larger cities and small towns too. It needs to be preserved, and I trust it will be.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Don Valley West.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to say before I start that I'm going to share my time with my colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

I'm very pleased to speak to this bill. I think it's wonderful that it's coming forward. I hope it passes quickly, because I, like some of my colleagues, am concerned about the buildings that are not being preserved while we continue to debate. It's been a long time coming in this province.

It seems to me that this bill is something of a coming of age in Ontario. We're looking at a number of things happening in the province that indicate we're realizing that we have a history to preserve, that we have a history at all: the fact that in Toronto for the last five years, we've had Doors Open Toronto, where we've celebrated the architecture in the city and people have gone and looked at the beautiful buildings.

I recently was in New York, where Open House New York, the equivalent of Doors Open Toronto, has only been going for two years, which is interesting. I would have thought New York would be doing it longer. It's a wonderful opportunity for those of us who aren't architects, who don't spend our time looking at or designing

buildings, to look at the beautiful buildings around us. I think we in Ontario have underestimated the beauty of our buildings. In Canada—perhaps in North America but particularly in Canada—we think of ourselves as a young country, as not having that heritage to preserve. Those of us who travelled—I didn't go to Europe until I was 19. I can remember that sense of things being so old, and that was the first time I had really thought of myself as coming from a young country. I think that ethos has pervaded our consciousness.

Bills like this acknowledge that it's not good enough to just delay the demolition of a building for 90 or 180 days; we have to prohibit the demolition of buildings we have deemed to be important, and we have to put in place clear criteria for the preservation of those buildings. That's what this bill will do, so it's extremely important.

I remember when I was in grade 10—in 1967 or 1968, I guess—at Richmond Hill High School. I was in my history class, looking out across the football field, and I watched as the Langstaffs' house moved across the football field to be placed on their property, but away from Yonge Street. The Langstaff family had been in Richmond Hill for many, many years—Langstaff Road is named after their family, and Dr Langstaff was one of the patrons of the town. They had an old heritage farmhouse that they lived in, and he was selling a piece of the property. But instead of demolishing the building, they moved it across the football field and put it facing Trench Street, I think, or Hall Street.

I remember thinking that was an unusual thing to happen. I had never experienced that before. It was an expression of a value system that I really wasn't aware of. Again, we didn't necessarily grow up in this country with a sense of preserving what's old, because we've lived with the idea that we have limitless land and limitless resources, so we could always build something new and better, and progress has become defined in terms of new, better and bigger.

What we're saying with this bill is, that's not always the case. Sometimes progress has to mean that we preserve our history, we preserve where we've been. So I am very pleased that we're moving ahead on this legislation. It sounds like we're going to have support from around the House, because this is another one of those issues that really isn't partisan. This is about preserving our heritage for all our children, no matter the party stripe. So I'm very pleased to support the bill, and I look forward to a debate and to watching as attitudes shift in this province. I hope that one of the outcomes, one of the results of this bill is that, at both a provincial and a municipal level, we're going to watch for buildings that are important.

In my own riding, there's a perfect example of the Arts and Crafts style that might have gotten torn down but, by chance, was bought by someone who believed in heritage—56 Blythwood, built by Herbert Elgie, one of the builders of Casa Loma. There was no legislation in place that would have protected that building. That legislation will be in place, and I look forward to it passing expeditiously.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to be able to lend my voice to others on this issue of passing the bill. When I was thinking about the bill, I was thinking about why we were doing this. I mean we often pass bills, and you wonder what's behind it, what's the motivation.

Of course, we're very close to November 11, and we often lament the fact that our students have not had the opportunity, as often as they should, to know and recognize the issues around November 11, but then, I think even more so, they often don't have the opportunity to recognize or get involved in the history of our country, much less in the history of our province or the history of our city. We used to call that, in the education system, the crowded curriculum, where you had to make some choices. Unfortunately, sometimes those choices were difficult.

Having said that, it's even more difficult a choice if we, as people in the province or municipal leaders, don't value the history to begin with. It's very difficult to say to a student, "You should value history," if in fact we don't value it ourselves.

I'm very fortunate in Etobicoke Centre to have Montgomery's Inn, which dates back into the mid-1700s. That's a very old part of the history of Metropolitan Toronto. I think about the times that the students are able to spend, to learn about the past, about the pioneers, to know and understand even the games the children played, and the differences in terms of how people rested, what they ate, how they kept their accounts, or even how they cooked in the kitchens, as compared to what they have today. Part of the reason for that is I think students need to understand that, in order to progress in the future, they need to know and understand their past.

That's exactly what a heritage act really does. It enables us to preserve and understand our past for the future. I think someone very famous said that if you don't understand your past, you're doomed to repeat it, and I think that's really an important lesson we all can learn.

There's no question that you have to have standards and criteria by which to judge. You need to have an appeal process that's fair, open and transparent for people who feel that they may choose to go down another path. You must, in fact, deal with places that are unsafe. But, having said that, I always believe that if you really want to do something, you can, regardless. You can keep the façade, for example, as we had previously in a number of school sites, or you can incorporate that façade into a new building. You can celebrate that history.

I remember going to the United States to celebrate the beginning of the Underground Railroad, not knowing that I would end up at Sackville school in Toronto, which, in fact, was one of the major sites for the end of the Underground Railroad, again only to learn that the beginning of the taxicab service in this province was started by someone who was a freed slave. That's the kind of history that we not only can talk about in classrooms, but we can actually show and then celebrate with our population, whether they are students or seniors. I think that's part of

what makes us unique in our history. It's part of the diversity and the culture that we can share with new immigrants who come to our country as they embrace the history that's here.

1620

What the act has been able to do is say that we celebrate, recognize and are prepared to work with municipalities around the designation of historical buildings. Just think about it. This is an historical building that we're standing in. It's an amazing place. There are others similar to it, maybe a smaller venue, right across this province; some a little older than others, but all of them make a difference in the history of this province. What the bill allows us to do is to celebrate that, and to do it in a way that's fair and, as I said, open and transparent to people who either own the properties or who wish to sell or maybe even develop those properties. You can't stand totally in the way of some progress; you have to be able to embrace it and make a difference in how that happens.

So, why the bill? Why not? It's really the right thing to do. There's nothing better than preserving where you come from in order to understand where you're going.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a couple of comments on the previous two speakers on Bill 60. The first thing I'd like to do today—I don't very often compliment the members of the government, but I do think it's important when the minister is in the House, like you are today, Minister Meilleur, to listen to the debate on your legislation. Quite often that doesn't happen in governments of all persuasions, and I think it's important that you hear firsthand the comments coming from your colleagues as well as ourselves.

Some of the previous speakers have mentioned this, but I think what's really important here is that we do respect the heritage and the architecture we see in so many of our beautiful villages and rural and urban settings, and even big cities. I'm a very strong supporter of preserving old buildings and making sure that we have them for many years to come.

Mr Prue mentioned earlier about going to Europe—no, I guess it was Ms Wynne. She mentioned going over to Europe and actually seeing this architecture that's 500 and 600 and 700 and 800 years old. I think I was in a bar in England that was 1,100 years old, an inn, and I could hardly imagine. It was there long before we had any types of buildings in our beautiful country. I can tell you that when they are preserved and respected, it grows on our young people as well. That's why it's important that we support this piece of legislation.

I know that some of my colleagues have made it very clear that they have some property rights type of issues, and I support them on that too. But overall, I think it's important that all governments have moved ahead in this direction, with some consultations. I'm pleased we are debating it at this time and look forward to passage of this bill this fall.

Mr Prue: I listened with great attention to the members from Don Valley West and Etobicoke Centre. I

think the member from Etobicoke Centre said something that was very poignant to me, which I think all too often Canadians and Ontarians and people in general don't realize. She said, "If we don't believe in our history, why will our children?", or something to that effect. That is absolutely true. There are many children who go to school who think that history is boring. They think that history is not relevant to them. They don't understand how they fit into all of that. That is, in a nutshell, why I think this bill is important. It is not the dry kind of history you get from a book; it is not some foreign history of kings and queens in a country you have never seen and may never see; it is the history that is all around us.

Every day, when I'm in this Legislature, there are school kids coming up and down the halls of this building. If you've never seen them or had a chance to just hang around for a few minutes, not just walk by them but have the chance to hang around them, look as they marvel at the paintings, at the buildings, at all the little characters that are carved into the walls and the sayings and the wood. They just stand there. They are in total awe. When they find out this building is about 125 years old—although I'm not sure of the exact age—that is unfathomable to them. Then they look up and see the Fathers of Confederation in the painting.

I've learned some things here today: this really great story about the Underground Railway. I knew it ended up in downtown Toronto in parts, but Sackville school was right near where I grew up in Regent Park. And I'm glad to see 56 Blythwood is still standing, because it was a fight from another day. I hope the owner will continue to keep that property in the way that it was originally built.

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act.

During the summer months, I had the opportunity to visit Spain, especially Granada and also Madrid. In Granada, I was able to visit the Alhambra. What a beautiful building. I was thinking that that building was built in the early 1500s, and what a heritage, what a history, what a culture, to preserve.

Bill 60, if enacted as put forward by the minister, will help us to keep our culture, it will help us to keep our history, and it will help us to preserve the heritage buildings which our children will be proud of later on.

This bill helps the minister prohibit the owners from demolishing the heritage buildings. Presently, if an owner wants to demolish a building, he can apply to the municipality, and the municipality has to give a refusal within 180 days. If that owner specifies certain amendments or certain conditions, he can still demolish the building. But this act, if enacted, will stop him from demolishing the heritage buildings.

I wholeheartedly support this bill, and I look forward to further debate on it.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'm privileged to respond to the comments made on Bill 60. As mentioned by the members earlier, it's certainly a privilege and an honour to serve in such a majestic venue, here at Queen's

Park, with the carvings, the marble, the stone and the history. It certainly adds to the character of the province of Ontario when people come in and we have the privilege of meeting dignitaries from other jurisdictions.

In regard to the bill, it's certainly very warranted. I'm not sure exactly how I'm going to vote, nor is my complete decision made as of yet.

I should say that recently, as of last night, I was at a great facility in Oshawa, Parkwood, the McLaughlin heritage building, a long history in Oshawa. When they were redoing it, they had to go right back to the original quarries where they got the stone from to redo the gardens and the fountains at Parkwood. Certainly, it's a phenomenal building. If anybody has the opportunity to tour it, they would gain a part of Ontario's history from an Oshawa perspective.

Some of the difficulties, though, are the cost of maintaining and getting those stones from a number of the states, the millions of dollars to get the stone up and to keep it up to the level, and where does that cost come into play, and how is it going to play out when they can't afford to maintain that?

Not only that, but I know, for example, that a mill was shut down, because it's a heritage site—I think it was built in 1846 or 1856—and they wanted to replace some parts. Nobody can manufacture those parts now so that they can use the mill, so the functioning aspect of the mill has shut down. That's a strong concern. How do those individuals who purchased it as a functioning mill continue on to utilize that opportunity? Because they have to use original or manufactured parts in the same fashion. Those are the areas where I have concerns.

As we mentioned earlier on, the landowners' rights must be respected. I know of other properties as well, where the family who built the house—I actually know the family who built it. The other generation has moved out. They don't want it as a heritage building. Locally, I know that the individuals who have moved into it say it should be declared one. How do you decide? I guess it's up to the municipality to make those decisions.

I thank you for the comments.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs Cansfield: I'd like to thank the members from Beaches-East York, Oshawa, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and Don Valley West for their comments regarding the heritage bill.

Mr Dunlop: Simcoe North.

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Mrs Cansfield: And Simcoe North. How could I forget Simcoe North?

One of the challenges we have is finding ways and means to protect, but I can tell you that that wonderful entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Ontario. A very good example is Ottawa Hydro where, in fact, they took some extraordinary heritage buildings and incorporated them into what they do in producing hydro. So it can be done. If there is a will, there is always a way.

I understand and respect the fact that you need designated criteria, and you need to have a reasonable appeal process. I believe Madam Meilleur has put all of that in place in the bill. But at the same time, it's also incumbent upon us not just to say no. I think it's really important to say, "How can we make this work? What is it we can do to make a difference in order to protect that history?"

That's an important part of what this bill is all about. Too often you tend to take the path of least resistance because it's often the easiest path. What we need to do is find ways to work together to make a difference in protecting that heritage which, in our case, is really very young yet. I had the fortune to be in China—it's 6,000 years old and they've managed to protect their history. I think we can protect ours in the same way. This is just the beginning of a lot of steps that we will take. The minister has managed to put in place a process whereby we can protect those assets which we consider very important for our future and our children's future. We can make a difference if we choose to make a difference.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is a pleasure to be able to rise this afternoon and join in the debate on Bill 60. As many would know, in the previous government I was the parliamentary assistant who did the consultations that formed the basis of much of the legislation we're looking at today. I want to speak for a moment a little bit about those consultations because, as many have recognized here in the debate today, this was something that people recognized as a process that needed to move forward. The act had not undergone any major change or consultation. There had been some changes made in the Government Efficiency Act in 2002, but largely this act had remained as it was in 1975.

When we undertook the consultations, it was very interesting, because we recognized there were a number of groups of stakeholders that had a very crucial role to play. It was an opportunity, then, to hear some of the issues that municipalities had to raise, particularly around the issue of demolition and how to organize themselves—sometimes, for smaller municipalities, limitations on expertise. Certainly an area that gained a great deal of conversation was the very new and popular notion of a conservation district and the kinds of roles municipalities would play in those kinds of designations.

We obviously wanted to hear, and did hear, from the heritage groups that have been mentioned here already today, as well as the professional associations who provided the kind of expertise that any government needs in order to move forward.

But I just stop and talk a moment, too, about a third group that we consulted with, and that was the people who were particularly interested as the real estate group and the kinds of concerns they had, and also the entrepreneurs. I think that many people have recognized the fact that there might be some issues with regard to designations that landowners may have difficulty with, and I'll speak to those in a few moments. But I think the

most important message that came from those consultations was the opportunity that changes in this act would bring to develop particularly viable commercial areas and the kind of response that some of these people already had in different parts of our province. It was really heartening to hear from those people, who were able to demonstrate through projects they had undertaken that then became very successful commercial undertakings. I think it speaks to several of our earlier speakers who talked about the importance of understanding your heritage and particularly, in this case, built heritage.

These entrepreneurs were able to find a ready market, people who want to rent sections or parts of these refurbished buildings because they are attractive, because they make good commercial sense. I think it's really important to balance our discussion and the study of this bill, knowing there are those people who recognize the opportunity that they present.

There are several issues. Obviously, one is in terms of the power of the minister, which was in the previous bill and is in this bill, to identify a provincial interest. I think it speaks to the need for that kind of oversight within the province, because there are opportunities that may not present themselves as easily, particularly when you are looking at smaller communities. I think that's certainly one particular aspect to this bill that is valuable for people.

The question of demolition is dealt with here. It's certainly one that has caused a great deal of angst and is also a problem in terms of balancing the needs and the rights of landowners and the community interest, or if you like to refer to it as the heritage interest. The position taken in this bill allows the owner to go to an OMB hearing. I would just suggest that given the changes to the OMB that are contemplated through the amendments to Bill 26—obviously we are in need of seeing provincial policy statements that would provide for the kind of guidance that an OMB hearing would take. Under the amendments as they are currently, Bill 26 "shall be consistent with" the provincial policy statements. It would seem to me that this ministry is going to have to look at the provincial policy statements in light of the changes they're suggesting in Bill 60.

The other area that I think is particularly important in providing support for this piece of legislation is the previous legislation on brownfields. We certainly see some examples in the province where creative entrepreneurs have been able to use the benefits that accrue from the brownfields legislation in terms of taxable benefits, and use those areas where buildings have sometimes been out of use for years and years to make those kinds of investments. I think those kinds of initiatives certainly bode well for the future in terms of protecting the built heritage that we have.

There are other areas that I think we need to identify as areas that are particularly important. A few moments ago I mentioned the heritage conservation districts. I think providing uniformity and guidelines and things like that which will allow communities to encourage and in-

crease the number of conservation districts is an important initiative in this piece of legislation. We see so many of them in Toronto, and when you look at other jurisdictions where they have been very successful in making specific conservation districts actual destinations in terms of tourism, I think those are extremely important initiatives this legislation would serve to encourage.

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The bill also has included an important addition in the area of provincial protection of marine heritage sites. In the last government, we had Toby Barrett as the person who brought forward a private member's bill in this area. The kind of education, if you like, the kind of discussion and the public hearings that were held on his private member's bill provided all legislators an opportunity to better understand the issue and the importance of identifying the marine heritage sites, and at the same time as protecting identified ones being able to encourage a quite vigorous tourism opportunity for many communities, particularly in the Great Lakes areas. So that kind of recognition that we have in this bill is also particularly important.

I want to speak for a moment on the importance we all recognize of making sure that we have a strong legislative framework in order to protect our heritage. As many before me have said, it is a reflection of who we are and where we came from. More and more, through the efforts of things like Doors Open and the work of the Ontario Heritage Foundation and other groups—I think of my own historical societies in my riding and the efforts they make to bring awareness to local history and the kinds of things that serve to give people that sense of the fact that they are part of their heritage.

I know that in my riding there are several groups that are particularly active. For instance, we have a very small but important hamlet in Ontario history, as well as Canadian history, Lloydtown, which was the starting point of the Lloydtown rebellion. As well, a national historic site is the Sharon Temple. So we have some very significant demonstrations of our ongoing efforts to maintain our heritage.

It becomes very clear as time passes that preserving and showcasing our built heritage is extremely important. When you see the kind of work that's done on some of these commercial developments that use heritage buildings, it demonstrates how important it is in contributing to the revitalization of the downtown core in some communities, the brownfields in others, and certainly in terms of local economic development.

Going back to some of the other areas in my own community, it's the work of many volunteers. Actually, tomorrow night I'm joining the members of the Georgina historical association in their annual village walk, which of course has a lot to do with Halloween and the kinds of historical past one might develop on a particularly haunted evening. So it's an ongoing work done by hundreds of volunteers.

I know, as a former teacher, that I used to organize a walking trip in downtown Toronto for students who

might or might not necessarily be familiar with the downtown core area. The tour was designed for them to find and identify the façades and the architectural ornamentation of downtown buildings that reflected classical Greek architecture. It fit in with the work they were doing in class and in their course of study.

One of the most interesting things was to watch the adults in the downtown core who would suddenly be aware that there would be a group of four or five students—because they were all divided up into little teams to do this—and would be trying to figure out what these students were actually looking at. The kids would be standing there looking at pillars and then discussing whether they were Corinthian or Doric pillars, and things like that. It always served to give them the sense of the connection, of the fact that 2,000 years, approximately, after these styles of architecture had been first developed, there they were in downtown Toronto. There they were alongside the skyscrapers, the subways and so forth.

It always served to give them that sense of connection. It's that sense of connection that obviously is behind making these changes to the Ontario Heritage Act. You never know when you will find out what connection you have to something that might have happened a long time ago unless you have the opportunity to visit and see these buildings and understand some of the built heritage.

On a personal note, about six months ago, in March, my neighbours and I celebrated the 200th anniversary of the piece of land, which we have a very small part of, that was granted to Jacques Baby. It was originally 1,800 acres; that was the crown grant to him. If you look in the hall at the east door, you will see a picture of Jacques Baby as Speaker in the first part of the 19th century.

I offer those couple of anecdotes simply to demonstrate how important it is for all of us to see the value of our heritage, and also to be able to talk about it, to be able to make sure that subsequent generations understand and appreciate where they have come from. I look forward—I'm assuming—to the committee hearings that will take place subsequent to this second reading, which I think will provide the opportunity for many of the people who have an interest in this particular bill to come forward. I am sure they will then be able to provide us with any further insight that we need to consider on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate and thank the member from York North for her work in this field and helping to update the heritage act. It reminded me of the work I did when I was a minister in 1990 and hearing from the heritage communities, which had a strong desire and urge to update the act, which hadn't been updated in a long time.

Many of those people in the heritage community have aged quite a lot in the last 15 years in their attempt to bring this bill up to date. My only disappointment is that I helped to start the review of the act but, unfortunately, we didn't succeed to actualize that initiative. I wanted to thank people like Julia from York North, and Mr Barrett

from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his work in marine heritage as well.

She raised a couple of good points and talked about the fact that there are economic opportunities in preserving our heritage. Quite apart from the inherent value of our heritage buildings and heritage sites, we can, by helping to repair some of those buildings that have not been held up to the standards, stimulate economic activity. It takes a great deal of skill to be able to keep those buildings up, and there are economic opportunities. They told me that 15 years ago; it's still valid today.

She also talked about the whole issue of the Ontario Municipal Board, and I congratulate the government for maintaining or including the fact that the Conservative review board members will be able to sit on the Ontario Municipal Board. That's a good thing, because many in the heritage community are quite concerned that members of the Ontario Municipal Board may not have the interest and/or the expertise to deal with some of these issues, and perhaps they could use some help, if not re-training, in the field as they review your guidelines. So these things are very helpful.

I remind the government that there are a lot of people interested in the cemeteries, and the fact that there are heritages that we need to protect. So hopefully in the review, through the hearings and not-too-long hearings, we will get to that as well.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Talking about cemeteries, every morning, I jog through Mount Pleasant Cemetery and jog right by the burial site of one of Canada's great Prime Ministers. That's a quiz for you, the mayor of East York. He was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. It's William Lyon Mackenzie King, our great Prime Minister during the 1920s, a long-serving Prime Minister who had very little fanfare. If this were an American President, there would be a huge monument. All we have is a little Canadian flag there and a small, discreet tombstone. But that's us being Canadians. I don't think that's bad, but I don't think we take our heritage as seriously as we should—I think we can all agree with that.

This bill begins to address that from an Ontario perspective. To me, this is a no-brainer. We have to proceed. We're so far behind. We're losing buildings as we speak. This bill was first introduced in April. It's an imperative. I heard the Conservatives yesterday talking about, "I'm worried about property rights." Let's get out of the 1970s.

The people of the world appreciate and know the economic value, the cultural value, the educational value of preserving heritage. This minister, Madam Meilleur from Eastview—she doesn't like to talk about Eastview, because that's the historical neighbourhood in her riding—is putting forth very good legislation that all the stakeholders in preserving heritage agree has to be done. Maybe we need a few more refinements, but we've got to get on with this. It's really, as I said, an imperative. But yesterday I heard her seatmates saying that this is an attack on property rights. Give me a break. Let's get on

with doing the job of preserving the heritage of this wonderful province, this wonderful city and this wonderful country. Let's move on.

The Acting Speaker: We are. The Chair recognizes the member from Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to respond to the member from York North, because I know her passion and commitment to Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act. In fact, Town Hall 1873 is celebrating their opening in Port Perry this Saturday night. It's a very significant thing, because that ministry right there, actually, the heritage conservation group, provided funding for the completion of the restoration of that building, which is a national heritage site.

It reminds me of the time I spent on LACAC, the local architectural conservation advisory committee, where I became, first of all, sensitized to the issue and appreciative of the work those volunteer groups do. So I do want to thank them for identifying, inventorying and characterizing the architecture in our various communities, and making those references and recommendations to municipal councils in terms of planning.

I look at my riding of Durham and think of the great number of heritage properties—it was really virtually a mill town. I think of Tyrone Mill, one of the oldest operating mills in Ontario. That mill still presses apples into apple cider, using water power, and also cuts various timber into reusable lumber. I also think of Vanstone Mill, which is not an operating mill today. I think it was sort of wiped out in Hurricane Hazel some 50 years ago. It's that type of character and heritage that we must protect.

If I drive down the country roads this time of year, it's the landscape architecture as well that needs to be preserved and protected. There's work to be done at MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, which needs to look at property values that have been affected by being designated.

Mr Prue: It is indeed a privilege again to stand for a two-minute comment on the very capable speech by the member from York North. She touched on an issue that has not been raised, at least not today and not in my understanding of what has been said in this bill; that is, the many historical societies that exist around the province, and probably in all our communities, that are bent upon trying to tell the story of the first people, or at least the first people they know, and what the history was and why their communities came into being and the magnificence of some of the buildings. I think we need to salute those historical societies.

We also need to salute the people who run the little local museums, of which there are many in this province, because they are the repositories of the collective artifacts of the communities. It's in those small museums that you have an opportunity to witness first-hand the Ontario of ages past. All too often these small museums are forced to close.

Even in a big city like Toronto, we had a museum called The Pier, which was located on the harbourfront. It

opened with huge fanfare probably about 10 years ago and closed with a whimper five years after that. It was funded by the city of Toronto. The city had great hopes for it, but when the city fell upon hard times, it was the very first thing that went on the chopping block. You will be saddened to know that many of the artifacts related to Ned Hanlan and his Olympic prowess—we all had a chance to cheer our Olympians here yesterday—have been removed from that building and are placed in various locations around the city of Toronto, where they are not observed and not seen, and people no longer understand that. We need to get those back on public display so we can be proud of our city and our province.

1700

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member from York North.

Mrs Munro: Thank you very much to the members for Trinity-Spadina, Eglinton-Lawrence, Durham and Beaches-East York. I appreciate the comments. I certainly forgot about the Conservation Review Board and the ability to cross-appoint. Certainly a valuable thing that I learned early in this was that you need the opportunity for that expertise to be shared.

The member from Eglinton-Lawrence referred to the fact that we seem not to take heritage as seriously as we should. I would just remind him that the fact that the bill has not undergone any major revision—I think what we need to look at, as the member from Trinity-Spadina has said, is that there was an effort made by his government. The bill we have before us today is definitely very familiar to me, similar in many respects. So I think there is a general understanding, as other speakers have mentioned this afternoon, that we took it for granted, we thought we were too young, we didn't have something that was 800 years old so did we have something worth preserving?

Historical societies and community museums—people like that—and the volunteers the member from Beaches-East York referred to, all reflect a growing understanding that we do have a heritage, we do have a history, we have a reason to be proud of it and we must move forward in making sure that the future knows about the past.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a great pleasure for me to stand today and speak in favour of Bill 60. At the outset, I want to notify the Chair that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough Centre.

As one of my colleagues just said, this is a bit of a no-brainer. The bill that has come forward is perhaps one of the most popular bills to come along in the past few months, and I want to begin by complimenting the minister on bringing forward a piece of legislation that I think a lot of different groups and organizations throughout Ontario have been waiting for. As you know, Mr Speaker, this is the first change to the Ontario Heritage Act since its introduction in 1975, and the minister should be congratulated for an excellent piece of work.

At its core, obviously, this bill is about preserving our past. I think it's fitting that we're debating this bill today, the day that two of our colleagues, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, came forward with two important pieces of legislation that will preserve part of our natural heritage in this province.

There is concern everywhere about our past and about making sure that decisions we make today will not be ones we regret. As we stand here in this beautiful, historical Queen's Park, we can think about the history that's here, and the idea of ripping down Queen's Park seems ludicrous. Yet in how many communities across this province can people point to buildings and beautiful heritage sites that were destroyed because of people not thinking it through, not thinking the ramifications through in previous years?

In my own community, we boast so many beautiful heritage sites. Perhaps the most famous is Woodside, the childhood home of Mackenzie King, former Prime Minister of Canada. And yet when you speak to people about the history of Woodside, it remained in private hands for many years. People remember it through different phases of its existence, and thank goodness it was rescued and turned into a federal park where people, both local and tourists, can come and enjoy it. So I think you can't overstate the importance of preserving our heritage.

What's interesting is that despite this thirst for preserving the past, the law as it stands right now is inadequate. As someone mentioned to me, it makes no sense. Under the current act, a municipality, if it's confronted with a situation where it has to deal with a building that is seen to have historical value and seen to want to be preserved for heritage reasons, can delay that process, if someone comes forward who wants to demolish it, but cannot prevent it. The importance of this bill is that, at its core, it gives municipalities the right to prohibit the demolition.

At the same time, I know some of my colleagues over here have raised issues about property rights and other red herrings. That does not mean that the individual who owns the building and wants to demolish it doesn't have a right to appeal.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): How do you know the herring is red?

Mr Milloy: I meant way over on the far left.

But what it does is finally give municipalities an act with some teeth in it, which is going to allow people to move forward.

Of course, we have an inherent interest in preserving our heritage but, at the same time, as I think a number of other speakers in the Legislature have pointed out, there is an economic benefit to our heritage. When I look around at communities, including my own, development can no longer take place in terms of just expanding the limits of a city. We're going to have to go to the downtown core and undertake brownfield development. We're going to have to look at older buildings and have them turned into functional uses.

Recently, for example, I was in Cambridge, where the University of Waterloo has opened its new school of architecture. Again, they took an old factory, an old building, and transformed it into a work of beauty, while still maintaining its historical integrity. It's these types of transformations that are the way of the future, as we see land and green space as a real priority.

I want to congratulate the minister for bringing forward this bill. I think it's a fair and balanced bill. As I say, it's the first one since 1975, and it's going to allow the province to move forward in terms of preserving its heritage. It complements much of the other work we're doing in terms of the greenbelt. I stand here today to express my unqualified support for it.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to begin by commending the Minister of Culture on what is a very effective bill that she has brought forward here today. She may be petite, but when it comes to protecting heritage, she's darn tough. I think that's what this legislation is about. It's about allowing municipalities to protect heritage.

Having served on a municipal council, I remember time after time when properties would come to our attention that we felt we wanted to preserve. You had that 180-day period where you could try to work something out before it was going to be demolished. You'd work really hard to try to find something, but sometimes the till would be empty and you just couldn't save the property. The time would run out.

Now, if this bill passes, municipalities will have the ability to preserve some of those properties, and that's a big step forward. That's really taking heritage seriously, and I commend the minister for doing that. It's a very important step forward.

It's also recognition of the value this government has for municipalities. We recognize them as bona fide levels of government. We recognize them as responsible, elected individuals who will do the appropriate thing and will use this kind of legislation appropriately.

While I'm up, I'd like to talk a little bit from a local perspective. My community of Scarborough celebrated its bicentennial, I guess it was in 1994. Our community was very proud of that. The member for Beaches-East York was mayor of his city, East York, when they were celebrating their bicentennial at the same time. So I know how much he appreciated it because we did a lot of events together back then. Our community took great pride in our 200-year history. A lot of it takes place in my very own riding of Scarborough Centre. When I look at where the first people in Scarborough settled, the first settlers, it was right on St Andrews Road in the middle of my riding—David and Mary Thomson. One of the earliest churches in Toronto, certainly I think the second-oldest church in Scarborough, is located at that very address on St Andrews: St Andrews Presbyterian Church. There's a building there that was the first school in Scarborough. Later, I think, it was turned into a library; well over 100 years old.

If you go down the road a little bit from that, you'll come to a farmhouse that used to be David and Mary Thomson's farmhouse. A lovely couple live there now. They've kept it up for many years. They cherish it; they look after it. I want to commend them today and people like them who take on these historic homes, who move into them and preserve them for all of us and look after them so that many levels of government that can't afford to be keeping up these buildings can be given a break, and they can actually be looking after those buildings for us.

If you go south of there, to Thomson Memorial Park, there is the Scarborough Historical Museum, just a wonderful place to immerse yourself in the history of Scarborough, the history of settlers, the people who settled much of the lands in Scarborough and throughout Toronto.

But these weren't the first people who walked these lands. I think it's important to acknowledge our native people, who spent a lot of their time on these lands. Certainly in Scarborough, we have one of the most historic sites in all of Canada, Tabor Hill, which the member for Scarborough West will know well. He and I have spent a lot of time up on Tabor Hill at the crack of dawn celebrating sunrise ceremonies with our native community that are totally moving.

1710

One of the things I find absolutely moving about this is that we had a problem a number of years ago. There's a big rock up there commemorating our native community on this historic site, and somebody desecrated that rock, which upset our native community greatly. Not only did it upset our native community, it upset our local community just as much. We all banded together. What amazed me was how our native community and our residential community felt exactly the same amount of pride in this historical native site. I was very proud as a representative of that community. I was very proud of the residents, how they took ownership of this area and how they've worked with the native community to preserve it. I think it spoke extremely well of the residents.

At first, we thought we were going to have a problem with the native community wanting to put a fence around it, and it was nothing of the sort. It was people caring about our heritage, working together. I think that speaks well of how all Ontarians feel about their past. We want to preserve our past. That's exactly what this legislation will help us to do. I thank the minister for bringing it forward. I think it will go a long way to preserving the heritage and the history of our towns, our cities and our province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: It was good to hear from the two Liberal members. I'm happy they're very supportive of their bill. I'm pleased that the member from Scarborough Centre also supports the bill. I'm not quite sure where he might have been on the vote to tear down the Concourse centre because I suspect he might have supported Mayor Mel in tearing it down. But it is good for the member

from Scarborough Centre to pronounce himself in preserving our heritage. There's a certain amount of epiphany that happens when you get here. So that's a good thing.

The other point I want to make is a point that I touched on when I made my speech—and my friend, as well, made the same remarks—and that has to do with how we deal with the transition provisions. I tell you, this is serious. When the city of Toronto passed their bylaw where owners of trees that were privately owned, which had nothing to do with the city, couldn't cut down their trees, the day before, one developer said, "Got to cut down all them trees and start building." I think there were 60 trees that were felled the day before that bylaw was going to come into force. I understand why some of us are concerned about the minister wanting or needing to take some measures now, soon—and in the past—in taking care of that eventuality because it does happen, and we know it.

The third point I want to remind people about is that we need to protect our cemeteries. This law does not do it. We need to have hearings—and I'm not saying long hearings—where we can hear from people who have an interest in preserving cemeteries as the heritage I believe they are. I hope we'll see that in the amendments that will be made.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate, and I want to commend the government for bringing this bill forward. We all, I know, take great pride in the heritage of this great province. I'm particularly proud of the role that Conservative governments historically have played in heritage, in ensuring we have a legislative framework around which our heritage can be protected.

It was indeed the Davis government that initially enacted the Ontario Heritage Act. We also know that the Peterson government and the subsequent Rae government attempted to do some consultation around this, but never did make any changes to the act. It was under Ernie Eves as Premier that we then, through work done by David Tsubouchi, made some additional substantive changes to the act.

I had the opportunity to be in Stouffville just last week. It was an opportunity to honour volunteers in the community with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum for the good work they do, and much of what they do is to help preserve historical buildings. I want to take this opportunity here in the Legislature to commend the good work of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, the board that oversees their good work and all the hundreds of volunteers who contribute to that effort.

I'm pleased to commit to supporting this legislation because it means so very much, not only to us today but to generations to come.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I'm pleased to enter into this debate for a minute or so. Each of us, I guess, has experiences in their professional career, their personal career, their lives, that reflect on the need to preserve our heritage, and I no less than others.

I come from a municipality, as a mayor and a councillor, that some 32 years ago had 43,000 acres of property within the jurisdiction abutting it expropriated by both the provincial and federal governments. I've watched over the past 32 years as building after building has been destroyed, has been left to neglect, has been torn down and lost—a tremendous amount of heritage during that period of time. Thus, the members of my community, my constituents, are certainly well aware of what happens when one doesn't pay any attention to one's heritage.

During that time there was a community-based museum that had to be relocated in its entirety from the village of Brougham, on Brock Road and Highway 7 in Pickering, to the village of Greenwood, some three or four kilometres away. The entire museum was relocated so that those buildings could be preserved and so that the heritage of the community, the nature of the community, would have an opportunity to continue so that young people and families could have the opportunity to experience what life was like 150 years ago in rural Ontario, although close now to an urban environment. Within that context, the museum continues to survive and flourish.

The opportunity for municipalities to protect heritage buildings is important, and we haven't had, to the extent that we will have, the opportunity for that to occur. Each of us has many examples—I've got more than one—about buildings that we've lost as a result of the lack of the powers and capacities to protect our heritage buildings.

Mr Prue: It is again a privilege to stand and comment, particularly on the speech by the member from Scarborough Centre. We served together as colleagues for some five years—or at least I was there for five years; he was there close to six—on the new megacity council of the city of Toronto. We often—

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): You forgot about me.

Mr Prue: But I'm speaking about him. You were there too. I'll speak about you later.

Mr Marchese: You didn't make a speech.

Mr Prue: You make a speech and I will talk about you too.

We would often have issues that came forward like this. I am very refreshed and thankful for what I am hearing today. I know we were not always in agreement in the old megacity around such issues as saving the Pier Museum and the Concourse Building and a few other things, but he is saying all the right things today and I commend him. It must be the air in here. Perhaps Madam Meilleur has finally convinced him that this is a bill worth saving, or maybe he just sees that things have changed, and that had he had those tools in the old municipal days, he might have done something very different. But I am very glad that he wants to save our history today.

He said a couple of important things that need to be touched on. Yes, our aboriginal history is all too important. One of the things that amazed me when I went into

estimates and questioned the Minister of Municipal Affairs last week was the swap of the ecologically sensitive lands of the Oak Ridges moraine for the Pickering lands, which are archeologically sensitive. I was very impressed, I have to tell you, that before those lands can be developed they are literally going to dig up 1,600 acres of land, down a foot, to make sure there are no settlements from our aboriginal peoples, and if there are, they are going to swap those lands in turn again, in order to protect that heritage. I think that should be commended and known as well.

1720

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre.

Mr Duguid: I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his comments in conjunction with myself earlier, and the members for Trinity-Spadina, Oak Ridges, Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge and, of course, the member for Beaches-East York, whom I've known for many years. He really is a history buff. He loves his history and is very passionate about it, as you can tell.

I'm going to tell you a little story about him. When he was mayor of East York, I remember him inviting me—I was a councillor in the city of Scarborough at the time, and we were both very proud cities back then before anybody got a piece of us and ripped us apart, but that's another story.

I remember being invited to East York. He made me put elf ears on and he put them on himself. We put little elf boots on. We had to go on a shopping spree as part of their bicentennial year. It was probably one of the most embarrassing moments of my life, because it ended up on the front page of the paper. What that tells you is that Mr Prue will do anything to promote history and heritage, and I think that speaks well of his passion and his commitment to it.

One little part I want to talk about—it's not little; it's important—is that this bill also talks about designating property standards maintenance for heritage properties. That is really important, because if you don't do that and you just use regular property standards compliance on these properties, you may well end up losing some of these properties just by poor maintenance alone. This will give municipalities some additional tools to ensure that these historic properties, these heritage sites, are better maintained. It will give them the tools to be able to do that. I think that's another good reason for this.

I will close by saying this: If we don't know where we've been, we will never know where we're going. I think it's very important, and a number of members spoke previously about this. Probably more important than anything we do in this debate and through this bill is ensuring that our young people get that appreciation of their history and heritage. I think all members feel the same way about that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm very pleased to join the debate on Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, 2004. If I take a look at the

purpose of the bill, it is to amend the current Ontario Heritage Act, which of course was enacted by the government of Premier Davis in 1975. What this bill will do is update municipal and provincial powers to identify and protect Ontario's cultural heritage resources.

I would certainly echo the comments that have been made by previous speakers. I believe this is extremely important. We are a young province. We are a young country. Regrettably, much of our history and our cultural heritage has been lost. I hope that with this expansion, this amendment, to the act, we are going to ensure the protection of that heritage in order that future generations can appreciate and learn from the past, because it is from the past that we learn about the present and plan for our future.

If we take a look at this act, which, as I said, was first enacted by Premier Davis in 1975, we know that all governments of all stripes have expressed an interest in rewriting the original act. The Peterson government between 1985 and 1990 and the Rae government in 1990 to 1995 both consulted. They were planning to rewrite the legislation. Regrettably, there was never any action taken on the recommendations that resulted.

There was action taken in 2002 when our government clarified, updated and improved the consistency of the provisions in the act. At that time what the amendments did was to ensure that maritime heritage was specifically covered by the act, which of course is very important. It also improved the protection of the architectural heritage. Again, this had certainly been an oversight. It also increased the fines for illegal demolition of designated buildings.

Now, I would hasten to add that there was further consultation during the time of Premier Eves, in 2002 and 2003. Of course, the minister of the day, David Tsubouchi, did introduce legislation. Regrettably, with the calling of the election, the bill was not passed.

I want to compliment and congratulate the member from York North, Julia Munro, because she was the individual who actually undertook a great deal of the consultations. She spent many hours making sure that the stakeholders in this province who had an interest in the legislation had the opportunity to express their views.

I'm pleased to say that the bill that has been introduced by the current minister really, in many ways, is a reflection of the bill introduced by Minister Tsubouchi—however, there have been some changes made to the act—and I want to congratulate the minister for bringing this forward. I think it's a very important bill.

Having said that, I think what I find the most interesting in this particular debate is to hear some of the members in this House who represent ridings all across Ontario speak to some of the history in their own communities. It's certainly been a learning experience for me.

In fact, when I was first elected as a member, during my first term between 1990 and 1995, I remember that part of what I enjoyed more than anything else was travelling to some of the communities that I served at that

time, when part of my riding was rural, and learning more about the heritage of those different communities.

I remember one particularly interesting Saturday when I was asked to dress up in period costume and participate in celebrating the anniversary of the date of the arrival of the slaves. Apparently—and this was totally unbeknownst to me, and I think it's unbeknownst to most of the people in Kitchener-Waterloo—part of the Underground Railroad that came from the United States to Canada actually ended in Hawkesville. Now, Hawkesville is a very tiny community outside of Kitchener-Waterloo. Most people in this House will never have been to Hawkesville. In fact, I dare say that until I became the member, I had never been to Hawkesville. It's not on any main road; it's on a little side road.

Anyway, I was asked to dress up and I was asked to participate. Apparently, in the middle of that river, on an island, was the end of the Underground Railroad for some of the slaves who were able to make their way to Canada. I learned that, at one time, this little community of Hawkesville had been almost totally populated by this particular community of slaves who had come via the Underground Railroad. Now, if you go to Hawkesville today, I don't think you would find one person remaining in that community. I think most people, when they think of the region of Waterloo, when they think of Kitchener-Waterloo, think of the Mennonites who supposedly were the people that came to settle in that community. I'm very pleased to say that Hawkesville has a rich heritage. In fact, it also has a home that at one time was inhabited by one of our Prime Ministers, John Diefenbaker.

I would certainly agree with the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who spoke earlier. We have a lot of history in Canada. We have a lot of history in Ontario—places where our Prime Ministers were born, lived and died—but unlike the United States, we do very, very little to make sure that this is appropriately marked, that people in the community know of the historical significance of those buildings.

1730

I can always remember one time taking our children on one of our trips, as we did every summer, to see the sites in Ontario. My husband and I both have a keen interest in history. I remember going to Kingston one time and thinking that we would show our children the grave of, of course, the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald. We had a lot of trouble, I would add, in even trying to find the cemetery. Once we found the cemetery, we had a lot of difficulty in actually finding the grave. We had, before that, travelled to the United States and had actually, of course, spent some time at some of the historical sites that commemorated past Presidents. What a difference there is. I really think in our own province and in our own country we really do need to do more to make people aware of the contribution that our Prime Ministers and other people have made to our province and to our country.

I want to go back to the history of my own community. I've mentioned Hawkesville and the slave

population that it had at one time. Our community does have a very, very rich history. Our community was settled by Mennonites and Germans. In the case of both of those groups of people who came here, there is quite a bit in our community that has been set aside in order that we can remember the contribution of those individuals. In fact, we have what is called the Schneider Haus, which is a home where the first Schneider family lived when they came to Canada.

Many of the original Mennonites who came to Kitchener-Waterloo actually came from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I'm very proud to say that my husband's ancestors, the Witmer family, were part of the original movement of Mennonites who came from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and moved to Kitchener-Waterloo. So you see in our community a lot of people who are of Mennonite origin. As I say, I think they've certainly made a good effort in making sure that some of that cultural heritage is preserved. Certainly the Schneider Haus is one example. It's a place where our children can go during summers, during spring breaks—I know my own children did—and learn a little bit about the way of life of some of our ancestors.

As far as the German community is concerned, of course, Kitchener at one time was called Berlin. Again, the proud heritage of the Germans is evident in our community as well. We have many German clubs, and we're soon going to be celebrating the German Christmas.

I think it is important that this bill do what needs to be done in our province, because we do need to make sure that we protect our very, very valuable cultural heritage. If I take a look at this bill, I see that it does move forward in a way—as I said, it builds on what minister Tsubouchi introduced—and it's going to do a better job of safeguarding our Ontario heritage properties for future generations.

We need to make sure that we protect our museums. There are many small museums throughout Ontario that need protection. We also need to make sure we protect our archival institutions, archaeological sites and of course our heritage buildings. We need to promote and preserve our heritage streets in Ontario. This bill does move forward in a way that does provide more protection.

The one thing this bill doesn't do is rein in the power of the OMB. That's something I see here that is perhaps lacking. I know that in opposition and in their platform, the Liberal government always argued that the OMB had too much power to overrule decisions of municipalities and did promise to overhaul it.

Something else that appears within this bill, in section 28, is that the government is going to exempt itself from the act by stating that the heritage conservation district designation provisions in part V of the act do not apply to government properties.

I also understand that Toronto had sought some substantial tax breaks for heritage buildings, but I see here in an editorial in the Toronto Star of April 23 that

that's not in the legislation. However, "the new rules do give the land or building owners the right to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board any heritage decision by city council." The Toronto Star on April 23 also said the city of Toronto welcomed news of the bill but there was also disappointment that several other changes the city wanted, including these enhanced tax breaks for heritage properties, were not included: "If we don't have the carrot to encourage owners to retain and restore their heritage properties, we will continue to have demolition applications." This is a quote from Kyle Rae, the councillor for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and also a member of the Toronto preservation board.

If we take a look here, we certainly are making progress, we are making forward movement. It builds on some of the amendments we made to the act. It makes clear that the removal of archaeological artifacts is not permitted without a licence. It makes demolition controls consistent across Ontario, another amendment to the act that we imposed. We increased the maximum fine for illegal demolitions from \$250,000 to \$1 million. It allowed the municipalities to prosecute offences without first having to obtain the minister's consent. It allowed municipalities to expand the mandate of their heritage advisory committees to advise on other heritage issues.

I want to conclude my remarks by congratulating people on all sides of this House who have made a commitment to protect the cultural heritage, the resources, in the province of Ontario. I pointed out at the outset that although this bill was originally introduced by Premier Davis, both the Liberals and the NDP in the past have taken a look at making amendments. There was recognition that there was a need to do so. However, it wasn't until the year 2002 that any amendments were made to the legislation. I also indicated that since that time Minister Tsubouchi, with the support of his PA Julia Munro, the member for York North, who did the consultation, was able to bring forward a bill. I'm pleased to say that the present minister has built on that legislation and made some appropriate changes to the legislation. I hope this bill will be able to move forward to committee. I hope there will be public hearings.

1740

Certainly there are people in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo who have expressed an interest in this bill. They look forward to having an opportunity for expressing their opinion. By and large, however, I would say that the communications I have received have been very supportive of the legislation. However, there are always a couple of changes that people would like to make.

I have appreciated the opportunity to speak to Bill 60. I hope we can move forward and at some point in time send this to committee, and also send this forward to public hearings.

If I look around the assembly here I know that, based on what I've heard from my colleagues, there are many people who take a very deep and abiding interest in the history of this province, in the history of their com-

munities. I know that if we have the opportunity for additional input, this bill can go nowhere but get even better than it is today in protecting our very valuable Ontario cultural heritage resources.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: It is again a pleasure to stand and comment on the very capable speech from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. She spoke about many things, but three of them grabbed my attention.

The first was about the Mennonite community that exists around Kitchener-Waterloo and indeed in much of southwestern Ontario. I'm sure we've all had an opportunity to go into those communities and see a lifestyle that is a little different from our own. It's not nearly so fast-paced. It is predominantly based around farms, although people are moving away from those as well.

It intrigued me because just this year I had an opportunity on vacation to go to a place that probably not many Canadians have been to, and that is the small country in Central America called Belize. I was on a tour of Belize, and I was going into the interior to look at some of the archaeological ruins of the Mayans, in particular one very large pyramid, where we had to traverse a waterway to get to it. There were all these beautiful farms, just row after row of farms and farm country. I asked the cab driver who was taking me there, "Who runs all these farms?" I was absolutely surprised when he told me it was all a Mennonite community and that the Mennonites had taken over this whole central part of Belize, had established wonderful, absolutely amazing farms. Sure enough, there by the side of the road I saw a couple of guys selling watermelons from their cart, and they were dressed just like the Mennonites one would find in Ontario. It was almost like déjà vu. So they have really prospered and done well around the world. I spoke too long on that. The archaeological ruin, by the way, was magnificent.

In the last couple of seconds, the power of the Ontario Municipal Board: I am a little bit nervous about that as well. I'm not sure I want to give them more power, but there has to be an appeal. I leave that to the minister—if you think that that too might be worth looking at.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): J'aimerais offrir mes congratulations à notre collègue l'honorable madame Meilleur pour l'introduction de la Loi 60. I will end my French speaking here, otherwise I may be accused that I speak French. Instead of doing that, I would really like to say that it's very timely, that it's a wonderful piece of legislation. I can see that it's being supported by the members of the House, and why not?

If we read the French version, it has a wonderful tone to it, la Loi 60, that our minister has introduced. While we say in English that it's the Ontario Heritage Act, in French we say « patrimoine de l'Ontario ». I think it's a wonderful word when we say « patrimoine ». It makes us more proud. It makes us think more of our physical, material past so that we can send it to our future. The lesson here is, "What are we sending to our kids in our

schools?" If we don't do it today, what are they going to remember tomorrow? Last week there was a wonderful article in the paper about a town in, I think it was Goderich or Tiverton or Kincardine, where this beautiful old home was burned down. It was destroyed, it was finished if it wasn't for the people of the area who said, "This is worth keeping." And they did. They managed to keep it, to restore it. It's a beautiful piece of Ontario history, of Canadian history. That shows why this bill is important, and that's why it has to be supported, to do exactly that.

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the great speech by my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, who is under some medical condition today, with I think a bit of laryngitis. As always she's had a great comment and a great speech. I liked the part of her remarks where she referred to the history of Kitchener-Waterloo and the Mennonite connection to that community.

Some of my comments are somewhat similar to Mr Prue's. I'm a person who has travelled a lot to St Jacobs and the Mennonite country and have always been intrigued by what I've seen in that area. I know that even today there's a Witmer's Garage just outside of St Jacobs. I took a picture to show Mrs Witmer. I can tell you, as we talk about heritage and culture, if you go into some of those little communities across our province—I'm not going to offend anybody but I'm going to say, for example, St Jacobs, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Cookstown. There's a lot more than that.

Mr O'Toole: Port Perry.

Mr Dunlop: Port Perry, Campbellville, there are lots of them around.

With some of the beautiful old homes, one of the things I'm most intrigued by is that in a lot of cases they have made them into bed and breakfasts, and they are very important tourist draws. Someone said earlier today how important it was that we keep our cultural heritage, not only for the fact we want to pass it on to our young people, but it's a great tourism draw as well as we look at the prospects of developing our great province even further down the road. I know there are literally thousands of beautiful bed and breakfasts across this province, and that was just the beginning of some of the comments I wanted to make on Mrs Witmer's great remarks.

Mr Marchese: It should be noted that I congratulated the member from York North, and I want to do the same for the member from Kitchener-Waterloo in terms of the role she played as well in helping to update the Ontario Heritage Act. You notice I'm being generous. But I did have one small observation. When the member from Kitchener-Waterloo talked about what you all did in 1992, you failed to mention that I, as the former minister in 1991, initiated the review of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: No, it's not necessary. It's just that when I am generous, you expect some generosity in return. It's like a reciprocity kind of treaty that we have

among each other, right? I recognize that the Liberals are refusing to acknowledge that all of you or many of you did some work, and that you in fact had introduced a bill—much of this bill.

So I want to recognize and thank you. I know that all they want to do is attack some of you who are in the business of simply saying, "We want to protect property rights." There are some among you, that's true. But the majority of you Conservatives are very supportive of this bill. Not one Liberal has stood up to say thank you for that. Why can't people be generous when you can be generous? We're having a love-in, almost, in terms of what the Tories did and what you are doing—failing to recognize what we did, but it's still a love-in, right? So please, be generous when you can.

1750

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs Witmer: Let me begin by acknowledging my oversight to the member from Trinity-Spadina. My notes did not indicate that you had initiated the review. But I thank you and I congratulate you for doing that.

I also want to thank my colleagues from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Beaches-East York and Simcoe North for their comments.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in this debate. I actually do have a touch of laryngitis, I will confess. Somebody has come to bring me some Halls, and I do appreciate that too.

I wanted to participate in this debate because, as I say, I have always had a keen personal interest in the history of our province, in the history of the communities in which I've had the pleasure to live over the years, whether it's Exeter, where I spent my childhood, or London, where I spent some time as a teacher and a student, and now in Kitchener-Waterloo.

We have very important historical heritage treasures in each one of our communities. If this bill is going to allow us to protect our past and do it more effectively, I think all of us in this House would certainly support that.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the unprecedented co-operation that we have, I seek unanimous consent to have an immediate second reading vote on Bill 60.

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker: I heard a no.

The member has sought unanimous consent for second reading of this bill. Is there unanimous consent?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker: No. Is there further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I want to comment on the comments from across the House. Certainly, our government does acknowledge the work everyone has done, because the heritage of this province belongs to all of us. It's great that there have been discussions on all sides of the House talking about why we need to protect the heritage of this province.

I want to highlight for Ontarians so they can know a little bit about what this heritage act does. In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, there have been some issues with respect to designation. The amendments to Bill 60, the amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act, deal with the issue of designation criteria by changing the existing act, which enables municipalities to designate property as cultural heritage, and as a result we don't have consistency across the province. One very good development in this new legislation will be the fact that we will now have objective, transparent criteria that will allow designations across the province so that each of us can feel a comfort level in our own community that those protections exist across the province.

Our Minister of Culture will develop standard designation criteria in consultation with stakeholders. I certainly look forward to having a consultation in my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore with those who have worked hard to protect the heritage in our community and to protect some very old buildings. Recently, in Etobicoke-Lakeshore we had a development of an old assembly hall. For those of you familiar with the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we have the old psychiatric hospital, which is now the grounds of Humber College in south Etobicoke. If you have an opportunity to come to Etobicoke to see how those old buildings have been protected, it's a beautiful old community with a new community centre called the Assembly Hall. An organization that I have been long part of, the Gatehouse, which is the old gatehouse of the psychiatric hospital, is now a child abuse advocacy centre—all on the grounds of Humber College.

Certainly in Etobicoke we have a long history. We have participated in the events at the Gatehouse, for example, with Doors Open Toronto, where people have been able to come back and see the old historical buildings renovated. We've had some wonderful discussions with people who were nurses years and years ago at the psychiatric hospital, who have come forward and told us stories of what the old assembly hall and the Gatehouse were and how important it is to them to create that protected history in the community of Etobicoke.

Another significant issue for all of us concerned about protecting heritage is having control of demolition and being able to step in when we need to. Bill 60 also allows municipalities to have demolition control. Currently, demolition control can be delayed, but not prevented. Those of us familiar with the issues in the city of Toronto have heard of circumstances where that delay was not significant enough to protect historical buildings. The current allowance is a delay of 180 days, after which the owners may proceed. Unfortunately, we in our city have lost some historical buildings that were delayed, but not prevented. So 180 days is not always enough. Those of us who have been involved in community organizations and worked with communities, when you have a community coming forward to work together, 180 days may seem like a long time. But for volunteer groups to get

organized, find legal counsel, work to try to get the owners' co-operation, that is not always available there.

The new proposed amendments, if passed, will give municipalities the power to prohibit rather than delay demolition of the property. That would apply to all properties that have been designated and all new designations. It allows municipalities to have greater control over important community buildings and preserve that history in all our own communities. It provides an ability for the landowners to appeal decisions refusing demolition, but the burden now lies on them, rather than on some of our community groups who have worked hard over the past but were not able to act quickly enough to deal with the 180 days they were allowed.

Also, there are important proposed amendments in the legislation that allow the Minister of Culture to exercise powers similar to the municipalities to designate cultural heritage property of provincial significance in consultation with our Ontario Heritage Foundation. Again, these powers would allow the minister to step in. In those circumstances where it was felt that the province needed to intervene, an appeal process, again for the landowners, would be in place.

In light of the heritage in our province, I do want to spend a few minutes speaking to those in our community who have French as their primary language and talk a little bit about—I know my colleague has already talked about the name of this statute in French, but I want to highlight some of the important provisions that I see when we read the French explanation note in Bill 60.

« L'article 27 est modifié pour prévoir que le registre des biens que tient une municipalité conformément à cet article peut comprendre des biens qui n'ont pas été désignés par la municipalité aux termes de l'article 29. » Alors, pour moi c'est quelque chose de très important, que le patrimoine de notre province va pouvoir être prévu et protégé.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HYDRO PROJECT

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): It being 6 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 37, the motion that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Oak Ridges has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am most disappointed that we have to be here at this hour but I do so because I am appalled at the conduct of the education minister when I put a very important question to him during question period today.

I want to start my remarks by reading a letter from Sue Fusco, who is the chair of a parent organization in York region called Stop Transmission Lines Over People, STOP.

1800

She wrote:

"Please relay to Mr Klees that I too was very disappointed with Minister Kennedy's response today and what has been offered in writing to concerned residents.

"His letters state that he will be referring this issue to the Minister of Energy since it is not in his mandate. I find it appalling that an education minister does not feel the health, safety and well-being of students he is also responsible for educating are not in his mandate. Just as he deflected this issue in correspondence, he repeated the performance today. I find this offensive and irresponsible.

"The parents of St Monica students may offer the healthiest lunch possible, but an apple a day will never keep the doctor away under the above-typical exposures that the students and staff will be subjected to if this proposal is approved.

"Please find attached the school board's new policy with regard to the distance that will be accounted for in siting new schools in the future."

It's interesting that even the school board has made the allowance now and introduced new policies that would ensure that a school is not sited closer than 200 metres from a corridor.

I am here today on behalf of the students, on behalf of the parents, on behalf of the staff of this school. I am challenging the minister not to interfere with the process but to assume his responsibility as Minister of Education to become involved in this process, to inform himself of the potential threats to the children who attend this school, to ensure that he becomes engaged in this process, to ensure that the Minister of Energy fully understands and that Hydro One fully understands, and to ensure that he brings to bear every authority he has as minister to ensure that these children are safe. No one is denying the issue of the need for additional energy supply to York region. This is simply all about ensuring that we have the safest way of providing that additional supply.

I'm calling on the Minister of Education to put aside his unwillingness to become engaged here and say, as minister, "I will use every authority I have to ensure that the facts are on the table." Whether it's Hydro One; whether it's the Minister of the Environment, who ultimately will also have to make a decision about whether to respond to a call for a bump-up of the environmental assessment; whether it is York region, which has now been handed the responsibility of making the final decision about whether this corridor will be followed—regardless of who, at the end of the day, is going to make this decision—this Minister of Education has the responsibility to stand with the students and staff and

ensure that, first of all, the health and safety of those children are kept in mind.

None of us in this place ever wants to look back and say we can be accused of having turned a blind eye to something that can be so important to the future lives of these children who are attending these schools. There are studies available that call into question and clearly say that the effect of that corridor, the EMF that results therefrom, is responsible for doubling the chances of young people getting cancer—leukemia. Why should we deflect that? Why would the Minister of Education not assume his responsibility to become engaged in this debate? I challenge him to do that.

I know we're going to hear from the parliamentary assistant, and I know that the parliamentary assistant will not give the same kind of trivial response that the minister gave earlier today.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to respond, but I am responding on behalf of the Minister of Energy, Dwight Duncan.

First of all, I'd like to say thank you to the honourable member from Oak Ridges for his support for his community.

I want to start by indicating that the Independent Market Operator has a responsibility for determining the supply in an area. They're charged with that responsibility. Hydro One is then charged with the transmission of that supply. Both of those boards have extraordinarily competent people, CEOs and chairs. I know you have as much confidence in the CEO of Hydro One as I do, because the previous government appointed that particular person, to fulfill their responsibility in terms of how they go about addressing that supply issue.

They have put in place discussions and consultations within that local community. They have very clearly articulated that they will not go forward with any of the proposals—and that's all this is at this time, a proposal—unless the York council determines that they wish that proposal to go forward. They also can call for a full environmental assessment, and that is the responsibility of York council.

For us, it's particularly important that those organizations, which the previous government had put in place, are depoliticized in terms of how they work with local governments. It's important that they listen to the local government and those local constituents, and there is a process in place to do that.

So remember, first of all, that it is a proposal. It is not a done thing unless the York region itself asks for it and Hydro has articulated their position. But it is Ontario Hydro's responsibility. They have a board quite capable of making those determinations. As I said, we have every confidence in the chair and the CEO of that board, as I'm sure you do because you put them in place.

The other thing is that they can call for a full environmental assessment; all they have to do is ask. The consultations are happening at the local level. The discussions are taking place. My understanding is that there was still another to take place. I don't know if it has

occurred or will be occurring in Newmarket in the not-too-distant future.

I also truly believe that local people have the right to state their position in a local venue, to be able to make their determinations. That's why this government put in place the greenbelt legislation that is proposed and Places to Grow, because we need to understand what local democracy is all about. That is the kind of thing we want to do.

Really, it's not deflecting. It belongs within Hydro One and York region—and the people that it's impacting and affecting. It is a proposal. There is a process. What I suggest to you is that that process in fact can occur in a way that involves the people themselves. That's the part that's really important in all of this; that there can be a full understanding of the issues; not some of the issues but a full understanding. People have a right to that.

That is why, again, we passed a bill about openness and transparency, an opportunity for people to actually have a conversation—sometimes I get so distressed over the word “dialogue” or “consultation”—for people to just talk to each other about what is impacting their community and how they can go about resolving it, so that it's not always a decision out of what we used to call the Pink Palace but in fact it's a decision that's made locally, involving the companies there.

Again, I applaud you for bringing the issue here. I don't disagree that it is an important issue, but it really belongs within Hydro One and York council. They have the opportunity to discuss this proposal, to move forward with the community, to do a full-impact environmental assessment. I think we should be able to allow that local democracy to take place.

We have talked how many times about allowing the municipalities themselves to have more autonomy in what occurs in their area. Again, we could interfere, but we've really worked at depoliticizing, because it isn't our issue. It belongs to the two organizations that the previous government put in place to handle both supply and distribution issues. Then it works with the local utility.

So the process is there. I think we can allow that process to occur. I'm sure Hydro One will do due diligence, as they always have in the past.

I thank the member for raising the issue.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

The House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm this evening.

The House adjourned at 1809.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 28 October 2004

Jeudi 28 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 octobre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES QUESTIONS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The speaker who previously had the floor is not here, so we'll move on. The Chair recognizes the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Applause.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you to my Liberal friends who are clapping. I want to welcome the electorate, the Ontario citizens who are watching this program. We are on live. I had to run here. I didn't know whether the Conservative member would be here to do his last minute. So I'm here on time to debate a very important bill, Bill 63, the Employment Standards Amendment Act.

I've got a whole lot to say on this bill, and I know that people watch because they see us engaged, they want to know what we're thinking, they want to know what the members of government have to say about this bill, what the opposition has to say. As you would imagine, we do have a lot to say, and that's why we like to be engaged with you. I say to the Liberals, this is an interactive process. Don't be shy to participate as I speak, because I think it's good for democracy.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): You feed off that, right?

Mr Marchese: I don't feed off it. I do not feed off it. That's unfair. But I do like the idea that when people want to engage me in some way, I want to acknowledge them in some way or other.

First of all, to the citizens of Ontario, you have a Liberal Party that claims to have a heart, that claims to be on the side of workers, that claims to support unions—nobody is nodding too hard on that one.

All I want to say to the unionized workforce and the non-unionized workforce is that Liberals are not friends of yours. They never have been; they never will be. They have never introduced any labour legislation in this province that you can be proud of. In fact, when we were in government, they opposed every piece of labour legislation we ever introduced.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yes, it's true that the Liberal Party opposed the social contract.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Marchese: Don't you fret. I don't mind my friends interacting with me. When we introduced the anti-scab legislation, you couldn't find one Liberal to be there, as you did that. We felt you need to help workers to fairly negotiate agreements, and that includes anti-scab legislation. Not one Liberal in the then official opposition ever stood up to say, "Yes, we think it's a good idea." Not one.

You don't have a Liberal caucus that is devoted to dealing with issues of labour as it relates to the Employment Standards Act in any way that would change what the Conservatives introduced, that would benefit workers. Not much there. You would think that Ontarians support a 40-hour workweek. It's a fair demand. In fact, we wouldn't be the only province to demand a 40-hour workweek, had you had the courage to introduce it, because there are many other provinces that have a 40-hour workweek.

Mr Wilkinson: Name some.

Mr Marchese: Name a couple of provinces? British Columbia is one. Saskatchewan is another; Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon, Northwest Territories. It's not just one province but many that have 40-hour workweeks. Why couldn't the Liberal Party, devoted to the family and to the working men and women of this province, introduce legislation that says, "We think a 40-hour week is fair," because people are working a lot of overtime, some people are not working and some are underworking. Some are unemployed and some are laid off and cannot be recalled, may not be recalled. Minister of Transportation, what's wrong with that? Whose side are you on?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Your side.

Mr Marchese: No, you're not on my side, I can tell you, Minister of Transportation, and you're not on the side of the working men and women out there. You're not. You had an opportunity—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Now, now. Mon ami, Minister Caplan, l'honorable monsieur Caplan, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, you have got to remember that you've got the wheels now. You can go back to 1990; you can go back to the 1970s, when they were in power; you can go back to whenever you want. You've got the wheels now. You just introduced a bill that says, "No, we're not going to have a 40-hour week, because we just don't like it. We want workers to work."

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Mais, il faut travailler de temps en temps.

M. Marchese: Ils travaillent beaucoup, et plus que ça.

Speaker, I need time to reflect with my friends about this bill, and I want to talk to the Liberals, and I want a whole half-hour. For that reason, we're going to move adjournment of this House.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Trinity-Spadina has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard a nay.

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members—a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1853 to 1923.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 10; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The Chair recognizes the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: It's good to be back. I was waiting—I gave the Liberals an opportunity for us to talk, but nobody came; not one person came. What happened to that 40-hour workweek? Tony Ruprecht, what happened to that 40-hour workweek? We don't have a 40-hour workweek. We didn't have it under the Tories, but we had hopes for the Liberals. People believed them. Union and non-union members said, "Finally, the Liberals; they're good, they've got a heart." Nothing came of it.

In fact we have a bill by mon ami monsieur Bentley—il n'est pas ici.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): You haven't got time, Rosie. You've got to read it.

Mr Marchese: Really?

Mr Bisson: Yes, you do. Trust me.

Mr Marchese: You're kidding. Two minutes and 30 seconds? We need at least an hour to debate this bill.

I've got so much to say, and yet I've got to move a motion here.

I move an amendment to the motion for second reading: that the bill be not now read a second time, but be read a second time six months hence.

Isn't that beautiful?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has moved an amendment to the motion for second reading. It reads, that the bill be not now read a second time, but be read a second time six months hence.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1927 to 1957.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. Take your seats.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 11; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost.

The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I only have a couple of seconds. Minister Bentley introduced Bill 63 as a measure to revoke the Tory 60-hour workweek. That's what he pretended to say. Well, it doesn't do that.

Interjection: What does it do?

Mr Marchese: I'll tell you what it does. This bill allows employers to seek permits for workweeks longer than 60 hours. We thought the Liberals were going to be better than that. You got rid of them and we got you, and now they can work even longer than 60 hours. Yet Minister Bentley made us all believe that somehow the 60-hour workweek was gone. It's with us, and it's going to stay with us for a long, long time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):

The purpose of this bill is obviously to reduce or reverse a harm or an injustice that was caused back in the Harris-Eves days, when they decided to bring in the 60-hour workweek. The legislation is straightforward. I see no problem with the legislation. Let's bring it through second reading. If they want us to bring it to committee or discuss it at committee, that's something they should consider. But let's move on; get this thing over and move on to the next bill.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm always compelled to respond to the minister from Trinity-Spadina—actually, the former minister—because he's always passionate about issues, especially employee rights.

Bill 63 is another attempt by the government to convince people that they're doing one thing when in fact they're really doing nothing. If you look at the legislation as it currently stands, with respect to working over the

mandatory 48 hours, what it really says is that both the employer and the employee must come to an agreement. That's the way it stands today. This is a consensual agreement.

But if you look at the real world of work today, you have to recognize that in the world of technology and contract employment, the relationship is not what it was some time ago. We need to make sure that in a world of just-in-time response to the market, whether it's the auto industry or suppliers to the auto industry or indeed the whole economy of Ontario, we need to make sure that employee rights are respected while at the same time the employer is able to fulfill their contractual commitments with whomever they're supplying their product to.

Once again, Bill 63 says one thing and does quite a different thing. In fact, there's really nothing compulsory here.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: It does not. Members of the government who are not familiar with the bill in any detail should realize that it does not eliminate the 60-hour workweek. For the viewer listening tonight, it's one more example of creating more bureaucracy, more red tape, solving no problems, but trying to convince you that they're the government of change. In fact, they're making it worse for the employers and the employees of Ontario.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It gives me great pleasure to comment on the astute observations of my colleague Rosario Marchese from Trinity-Spadina. I have to say that he really took the time to review the analysis of the bill that provides us with the opportunity to, quite frankly, determine that the bill itself is a huge disappointment for workers in Ontario. In fact, the Ontario Federation of Labour is extremely disappointed with this particular bill. Last night in Hamilton East, I attended a meeting of injured workers and explained to them the lack of teeth in this bill and how much this bill is a broken promise by the government, and they already knew. I wasn't giving them any news. They were shaking their heads in agreement and saying, "Yes, we know that the Liberal government has once again pretended they were going to fix"—sorry—"the nasty legislation that was brought in by the previous government." I have to say it was nasty. I think the people of Ontario, particularly the workers of Ontario, had some serious expectations about what this government was going to do to redress the injustices that were brought in by the previous government. What we found in this particular bill was exactly the opposite.

Mr Marchese: It's worse.

Ms Horwath: You're right. It's actually worse than the previous legislation. What it does, in the total, normal liberal way, is pretend it's going to make an impact, and we know it doesn't make an impact. It messes around the edges and perhaps makes the employer jump through one or two hoops more, but ultimately what it does is tell the workers of Ontario, "You do not have the right to work a decent workweek that's going to give you work-life balance. What you're going to end up having to do is

kowtow to your employer's desire to make you work 60, 62, 64, 66." It is not progressive legislation; it's shameful.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I am pleased to speak in support of Bill 63. I know that I have had ample opportunity throughout this debate to state my views with respect to the bill. This bill brings forward protections for workers in this province. I look forward to voting on it. I'm surprised that my colleagues across the House don't look forward to voting on this legislation and bringing protections in for the workers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you to friends and lots of foes on the other side. They are so eager to vote for this bill because it supports workers, and they don't feel any qualms of shame for saying it. How is it supportive of workers when this bill allows employers to seek permits that would allow the workweeks to be longer than 60 hours? How is that supportive of the workers? Can she explain that to me, she or the minister when he comes in this House? How is it possible that when there is no maximum on excessive hours of work per week or per year in Bill 63, that's a good thing for workers? How can she justify that? How can she say that it's good for working men and women?

Speaker, you have to understand why someone would be upset. When my friend here says the unions feel disappointed—disappointed? They should be and ought to be shocked, it would seem to me. They argue, "But if the employee says it's OK to work beyond 48 hours, then that's OK." That's what the Tories used to argue. It's not OK, member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. It's not a level playing field. Employers have power and employees do not. So if the employer says to the little guy, "We'd like you to work beyond the 48-hour week," what's he going to say? "No, I'm sorry, Mr Employer, I'm not going to work"?

You have not eliminated the averaging that the Tories allowed. They allowed averaging over a four-week period, when averaging should be over one week, and if you work over 44 hours, you get overtime. You don't get that with the Libs, and they are so eager to support this bill, because they are so eager to support the working man and woman. This is not a bill that supports workers or non-unionized workers. This is an anti-worker bill, and we are going to fight it until the very end.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the deputy government House leader.

Hon Mr Caplan: It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 63 tonight. It was introduced by my colleague Minister Bentley, the member from London West, back on April 26, 2004, some six months ago.

At the time, the members of the Conservative Party said they were going to vote against it because it repeals the 60-hour workweek, which they brought in with great fanfare to try to kowtow to their friends simply on one side of the equation, simply on the business side, the management side.

It was opposed at the time by my friends in the third party, in the New Democratic Party, who have claimed to be on the side of workers but have spent all night, in fact have used obstructionist tactics, to delay the passage of this bill.

I ask you, Speaker, who's really in favour of workers? Not the NDP, the party of the social contract; not the NDP, the party that blocked family medical leave protecting workers whose family members get sick and giving them job guarantees; not the party that is now blocking a repeal of the 60-hour workweek. Speaker, members of that third party should be ashamed of themselves. They had one line back when they opposed the Tories. Now that we're undoing that sorry legacy, they have an entirely different line. They're opposed to the fact that we're going back to the Employment Standards Act the way it was under the New Democratic Party. Do you believe that? All of those criticisms you just heard from the member from Trinity-Spadina existed in their own legislation.

So I must say to the member from Trinity-Spadina that the comments he just represented over the last hour or so are bunk, absolute bunk, my friend. You make no sense. You are not consistent. You are anti-worker because you're blocking this bill. We've had 10 hours of debate in this House. The opposition has moved to end the debate five times. They don't want to debate this any more. That's why I move that this motion now be put.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: We're going to adjourn the House for a five-minute recess.

The House recessed from 2010 to 2017.

The Acting Speaker: We're not going to allow the motion. Continue the debate.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, I am terribly disappointed that you wouldn't allow that motion. I must say that I am very disappointed that motion would not be allowed.

Mr Marchese: Are you challenging the Speaker?

Hon Mr Caplan: No, I'm just expressing my disappointment. There's sufficient precedent, I must admit, but that's OK, because eventually we will have a second reading vote, we will have committee hearings, we will have third reading and we will finally repeal the 60-hour workweek, a draconian measure that my friends opposite brought in and that my friends in the third party say they oppose. But obviously they do not support workers, because they don't support our repeal of the 60-hour workweek. As I said, they obstructed family medical leave, where workers would have the right to have their jobs—they introduced the social contract. I think that's absolutely disappointing.

Speaker, I must tell you I'm disappointed that you did not allow the motion for consideration of the second reading vote, but I do know that eventually this bill will come to the floor, will pass and we will have resolution of it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr O'Toole: I've listened quite intently, not just since April 26, when Minister Bentley introduced Bill 63.

I would have to say that just the very name implies they're substantively changing the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to certain matters, specifically hours of work. After reviewing the bill and listening to the debate and their attempt to force the vote on this bill after very limited debate, it disappoints me and members of our caucus, and dare I say the members of the NDP caucus as well, that it fails to do what it purports to do.

It's very much like during the election, and I hate to digress. Perhaps I may be off topic, but during the election my opponent was saying one thing, and I knew and they knew—for that matter, Mr Phillips knew; he's here tonight—that they couldn't deliver on the promises. I have the book that said they had \$6 billion or \$7 billion worth of promises, promising to spend a fortune. This bill is another example of, "Say one thing, do another." In fact, over the 10 years I've been here, and the 10 years prior to that while I've been listening, one thing you can depend on is absolutely nothing that the Liberals say. I'm listening to Adscam and all that in Ottawa. Paul Martin is blaming everyone.

For the viewer tonight, this bill really says it's changing the requirement of the 60-hour workweek. In fact, it really penalizes the employee. In many cases we're very much pro creating jobs and a healthy economy, and I understand that some of the NDP's legislation is kind of giving more power to workers, and better for them. What we want is fairness and honesty, and that's completely missing from Bill 63.

Mr Marchese: If you listened very carefully to the minister of public infrastructure and otherwise, he said absolutely nothing. If you listen to other members as they may take the opportunity to speak, they will say nothing. Do you know why? Because there is nothing to say, other than, "This is a bill that supports workers and is for workers, and let's move on and vote." That's all they can say, because the bill belies what they say it does. We used to attack the Tories for Orwellian titles, and the Liberals just picked up where they left off. Nothing changes. Plus ça change. Nothing changes. Don't you see why people like me get frustrated?

They say this gets rid of the 60-hour workweek. Well, show me in the bill where it does. It does not do that. In fact, the employer can ask, through the ministry, to work for longer than 60 hours and they will. So it's left to the ministry to determine what that cap is. There is no cap. There is no weekly cap. There is no monthly cap. We don't know, because the employer can go to the ministry and say, "We want to be able to work for so many hours. We got approval from Mr Peterson, who wants to work more than 48 hours a week or whatever it is, and everything is dandy." And the Liberals say, "That's OK."

Listen carefully, Speaker, and I say to you people watching, listen carefully to what the Liberals are saying. They're saying absolutely rien, because it's indefensible. This bill is indefensible. Non-unionized workers have no protection. The minister says they're going to have 2,000 inspections out there for the workplace. There are no

enforcement workers; there is no extra money. How can they enforce anything without any extra workers? There is nothing for the worker. This is the extension of what the Tories left us. This is not good for workers.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I'm pleased to rise in response to the comments of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and deputy House leader. I think he made an appropriate and salient motion at this point in time. After more than seven hours' debate, our rotation is now well below the 10-minute limit. Many members have spoken to this bill in the House and a lot of territory has been covered. I hope at some point the members opposite will recognize the wisdom of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and deputy House leader in asking that the question be put.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I think when we look at Bill 63, we're seeing the ability of the government to provide an election promise. During the election, this was something that was held out to the voters and certainly to the workers of this province.

They interpreted the previous bill that had allowed by mutual agreement a 60-hour workweek, but based on a monthly cap. So instead, during the election the promise was to eliminate this piece of legislation.

What they did then was to create a level of expectation, and it is the expectation that it would in fact be a very different kind of structure than we see in this bill. No, there is no monthly cap, but there is certainly the ability for people to work just as long or longer. But with this bill there is the addition of red tape, of having to go through further administrative burden. We know that people before were able to do this. There were 19,000 applications that the Ministry of Labour had to work through.

Our bill was an attempt to eliminate that and provide the guarantee for both employers and employees. What we're seeing here tonight is simply sleight of hand; nothing has changed.

The Acting Speaker: In reply, the Chair recognizes the deputy government House leader.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, I can assure you and all members of this House, especially in the opposition, that we will eliminate the 60-hour workweek. Whether it is over your objections or not, it will happen. I want to assure workers across this province that this—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Caplan: They howl in protest because they see their hideous agenda now unravel in front of their eyes, but it will happen. Rest assured that the 60-hour workweek will come to an end.

To my friends in the third party I say shame on you. Shame on you that you say one thing, that you support workers, but your actions are entirely different. You say you support collective bargaining; you introduce the social contract. You say you support hours of work; you oppose a workweek that comes back to a progressive employment standards level that we've seen in the past. You say you support workers; you obstruct family medical leave. This is the legacy of the third party.

Workers in this province are not fooled by your rhetoric. Workers are not fooled. They know your record and they know how you vote. You've paid a price for it. It is why that party has become irrelevant in the province of Ontario.

I do know that this bill will pass. Workers' lives will be better and it will be thanks to Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's interesting that the arrogance of the official government suggests that the NDP is irrelevant. I would ask you to remember the by-election in Hamilton not long ago, when a new member was returned to this House. I believe last Thursday, about a week ago, she moved a motion that at the very least embarrassed the government in losing a day. Not bad for irrelevance; not bad at all.

You know, it's interesting when you consider what's going on tonight. There's a lot of bickering going on in the House and a lot of not good faith. I'm particularly pleased to be speaking at this moment. Perhaps I can lower the temperature in the House and perhaps we can talk about some of the issues of Bill 63, the elimination of the 60-hour workweek. It ain't gonna work. The bill doesn't do it. It's not going to happen.

The government likes to be the great protector of workers, to protect workers against a 60-hour workweek: my God, a sweatshop of 60 hours. Do you know what? Do you know what workers tell me? On Friday of every week I sit in my constituency office and people come in and talk to me. Last Friday they came in and said, "Does this mean I can't work 60 hours a week any more?" I said, "Yes, if this bill passes you won't be able to work 60 hours a week without permission from the Minister of Labour." They said, "Every once in a while we get behind in our company and I get an opportunity to work 60 hours a week." Well, he's making 32 bucks an hour. Christmas is coming. He really wants to work 60 hour a week. He wants to pay those Christmas bills, and this government is going to prevent that from happening. I'm sorry, in a democratic society of freedom that's wrong.

You guys are wrong. You can't protect people from doing what they want to do, and that's what you're doing in this bill. You're wrong. All the employers in this province are bad people; that's what you're saying. You're saying that all the employers have a whip out over their employees and they're beating them. That may have worked in the 1880s and in the 1890s, but it doesn't work in today's society. This bill is opposed to workers' rights, and that's bad legislation.

I see the member from Scarborough-someplace is upset about that.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Don't demean Scarborough.

Mr Chudleigh: Sorry; York, whatever.

I'm not going to abuse the NDP tonight. They've made an eloquent statement and of course they're the party of labour. They are the labour party in Ontario. Under their government, there were 10,000 jobs lost in

Ontario. Under our government, in eight years there were a million jobs created. I would suggest to you that every labour person in Ontario wants a job, and if he doesn't want a job, he wants a better job. We created a million jobs in Ontario over our term of government, unprecedented in Ontario's history; an unprecedented rate of job growth. That's what we created. That's our record.

The private sector—

The Acting Speaker: Member from Perth-Middlesex, you're not in your seat. If you want to take your own seat.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the protection.

Bert Stewart would never have done something like that—Bert Johnson; sorry.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): The best of Bert Johnson and the best of Gary Stewart put together—one super-MPP.

Mr Chudleigh: Absolutely, a super-MPP.

My God, I've burned through a lot of this stuff. The pace of the House is just too fast, and I think that for this evening anyway we should adjourn the House. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2034 to 2104.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Halton has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour please rise and remain standing. Please be seated.

All those opposed please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 9; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. The member from Halton.

Mr Chudleigh: I know, Mr Speaker, you can identify with my disappointment on that loss on that vote, but we will labour on. Labour on—did you get that? That's a little pun there.

You know we were talking about the 60-hour workweek and I was mentioning how employees sometimes want to work a 60-hour workweek. I'll give you an example.

Last year, in 2003, the Queen's Plate was held at the Woodbine Racetrack on the same—

Mr O'Toole: Who won?

Mr Chudleigh: I don't know who won. I didn't have any money on them.

It was held the same weekend as the North American Cup. The people who serve dinner and drinks, and the wait staff at the Woodbine Racetrack, who do such a marvellous job, make the day such an exciting time. They like to work that weekend because the tips are really good and the people who come to those races are perhaps what might be referred to in the industry as high rollers. But because of this legislation, they couldn't have those

two races back-to-back, because there wouldn't be a 12-hour period that they would have off, which is covered in this legislation. So they couldn't work that very lucrative weekend—which they all want to do—because of this legislation, unless they went through the bureaucratic claptrap that is outlined in the bill and is not going to work very smoothly anyway.

So I would like to move an amendment to the motion for second reading. I move that the bill be now read a second time, but be read a second time four months hence.

The Acting Speaker: There is already an amendment on the floor, and only one is permitted. So that's not in order.

Mr Chudleigh: I would like to move a motion of personal privilege on that if I could, if you'd like to stop the clock, because the member from—

The Acting Speaker: I've already decided it's not in order. Do you want to continue speaking?

Mr Chudleigh: So that amendment's not in order, you're saying? OK.

There are a few other items that I could talk to on this Employment Standards Act—17.4, for instance, sets out a criterion which will allow for a 60-hour workweek, even if approval from the ministry is not received within 90 days after application. What protection is that? After 90 days—oh, I think perhaps we'll leave the 90 days for a while, Mr Speaker, and I'd like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2110 to 2140.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Chudleigh has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise.

All those against, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 9; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Chudleigh?

Mr Chudleigh: I'm very pleased that we are able to continue to discuss this very important piece of legislation, which is working against the best interests of Ontario's hard-working people who want to go to work and make that extra money whenever they have the opportunity to do so.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I just want to say to Ted, the member from Halton, that this government is on your side. They are hand in hand with you. They're not fighting your bill; they're helping to improve your bill.

Mr Chudleigh: Shoot over there.

Mr Marchese: I hear you, but I don't know what you were arguing in terms of what they're doing. They're not interested in having a cap on the workweek, and you

weren't either; you're united on that. There are no maximum working hours; you're united on that. They said they would eliminate the 60-hour workweek. They're not doing that. You guys are united on that. You have to say that, otherwise people get confused out there because then you create the impression that they're doing something different. They're not.

They can go to the ministry and ask that working hours exceed 60 a week. They can do that, and we believe that when the ministry gets the agreement from individual workers to do so, they will say it's OK. If that is the case, they are no different from you; in fact, they're worse, because they can, and would, increase the working hours beyond 60. You've got to understand that, Ted; I'm a bit concerned.

We want to take this to committee; we absolutely do. We need to hear from working men and women. We want to hear from the unions that would say, "You're right. We love you Liberals. We always loved you. We love this bill." We want to hear from working men and women who say, "We love this bill. Good heavens, we didn't know, but the bill does eliminate the 60-hour workweek." We want to hear that, please.

Let's join together. We'll send it to committee, which of course is what we all want to do, and hear from the unionized and non-unionized men and women so they can praise the good work you are doing. I can't wait.

Mr Colle: I find it quite perplexing, on this side of the House, to try to figure out this coalition of the NDP and the Conservatives, what they really have in common, because they're contradicting themselves. The left side of the coalition, the NDP, is saying, "The workers shouldn't work, because the minister would have to get permission from the employer"; the right side of the coalition is saying, "People want to work until they blow the top of their heads off." The right side says, "Let 'em work till they drop." The left side—I'm not sure, because you are supposed to be in the same coalition, obstructing this bill. Yet, as you obstruct this bill—like any bill, there's always a question for debate. But you're not even willing to make this bill go forward. There's no doubt that there is improvement here for people in Ontario who want certain protections. Do you know why I think we're right? It's because we've got agreement on the far right and the far left in this coalition of the unwashed.

I think what we're telling the people of Ontario is, "There's a lot of work to be done in this province. We want to go ahead and do it." And all you can do is ring bells. Perhaps you could come forward with a better strategy than ringing bells and tell us how you're going to do things better for the people of Ontario. At least, with this bill, we're trying to do that. But you have no alternative. All you say is, "We agree with the far right. Don't do it." That's all you can say.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I look forward to this opportunity on Bill 63. I can remember when the legislation they're trying to replace was brought in by Minister Stockwell. At that time, I had some strong concerns. Behind closed doors with the minister and

caucus, I spoke about the fact that I wouldn't support the bill until the minister actually came out to the riding of Oshawa and explained it to the people from my riding. Well, first reading came along, and then he agreed to come out after that. I have to tell you that I took out ads and we called everybody. Minister Stockwell was a bit concerned about coming to Oshawa, a labour town—CAW, General Motors—and what was going to happen to him. We had 43 people at the meeting. The interest and the concern on that bill was not that strong.

Actually, the more I got into it, the more I found out that there were over 19,000 permits issued annually prior to the piece of legislation we're replacing. It was a huge bureaucracy that was rubber-stamping. All the permits were coming through, were rubber-stamped to go through, and the next one came in. So what was taking place was General Motors actually had to utilize fewer individuals once our piece of legislation was brought in. Now we're going to have companies like General Motors employ more people to work inside to rubber-stamp the bills to allow it to go through—and that's exactly what they said.

I understand there's going to be some tinkering behind closed doors. Effectively, they're going to be allowed to do it by e-mail, through the Net, so they don't have to send the forms back and forth to do that process, which will help out. But it's not going to change the situation that's going on now.

As a matter of fact, I met with a lot of CAW workers who had concerns that they weren't going to—because, quite frankly, a lot of them look forward to their overtime hours. A lot of them are working a six-day week and enjoying it or getting all the extra overtime they can, and they're paid very well for it.

I don't think this is going to resolve the situation, and I don't think it's going to accomplish what we're doing. What we're doing is moving forward on a feel-good piece of legislation that's not going to change anything, but only add more bureaucracy.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): In approximately three, four minutes' time, Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East, is going to be speaking to this bill on behalf of New Democrats here in this Legislature and across the province of Ontario and on behalf of working women and men, unionized and non-unionized, who have been abandoned by this government.

When people voted for change—this government, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, give the minimum-wage workers in our province change; they give them spare change.

I tell you that this legislation does not rectify the de-regulation of work hours in this province. Indeed, it gives license to greedy, voracious, mean-spirited, dark-hearted bosses to rip off and exploit workers more than they ever have been before—ever—in the history of this province since, for sure, the era of the dirty, mean 1930s.

This government has presented legislation, the title of which is more deceptive than anything we ever saw from their predecessors, the Conservatives. At least the Con-

servatives had a sense of humour about it. There's no sense of humour about the mean-spiritedness of Liberals when it comes to working women and men and their rights in the workplace.

Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East, is going to tell you that New Democrats don't support this legislation because New Democrats stand with working women and men. New Democrats insist that this legislation go to committee so there can be broad-based and thorough consideration of the analysis and opinions of people across this province. New Democrats are going to insist that this legislation receive the thorough scrutiny it deserves in committee.

I say to this government that should it try to block the referral of this bill to committee, it will have demonstrated itself to have been the heavy-fisted, ham-fisted legitimate successor to the mean-spirited, black-hearted Tories.

The Speaker: Member from Halton, you have two minutes.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for his comments. He sees a plot developing in this area. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence made some interesting comments. His comments on the workplace reminded me of the stage show *Oliver!* and the 1800s and how people abused their workers.

2150

In fact, in today's environment, the workers of Ontario have options. If they don't like the job they have, they can move to another job. Our government created a million new jobs in this province and many of those jobs are still here. They're beginning to kind of fade away, as this government increases taxes and makes things more and more difficult for employers to operate in this province, but they're still there. Workers have options.

This bill is anti-worker. Creating jobs in this province will give workers the options that they need. The 48 hours, 60 hours—I don't know, today we're working something like 18 hours. We're going to be here until midnight. I started at about 8 o'clock this morning; I was here. That would be illegal. I should get permission from the Minister of Labour.

The member mentioned that all we can do is ring bells. The member suggests that we ring bells. You have a majority, sir. You should get things done. If you can't manage this government with a majority, how can you manage Ontario, which you're not doing? You're not managing Ontario. You're not creating jobs in Ontario because you can't manage this place even though you have a majority.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Horwath: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this particular bill, particularly in the context of the discussion that we're having tonight, and have been having over the last couple of days, about how real, progressive and appropriate change occurs in Ontario.

It was interesting to me to hear the questions-and-comments portion of the last few minutes, when the

members were given the opportunity to comment on some of the previous debate. That set a good context for the comments I'm going to make about this particular bill, because I think what's really salient about some of the issues that were raised during that discussion was the comment made by my friend Peter Kormos. One of the things he said, and I think it's quite true, in the way he characterized what this bill really is—and I think he was absolutely right on the money when he articulated the fact that this bill really is mean-spirited in terms of what this government is prepared to do for the workers of Ontario.

I say that because I think the workers of Ontario had some high expectations. In fact, do you know what? I don't think the workers had some high expectations, I know that the workers of Ontario had high expectations. I know that the workers in Hamilton East had high expectations of real reform when this government was elected a scant year ago. Here they are, after a year, faced with this legislation, faced with this piece of work that really does nothing to redress some of the rollbacks, some of the regressive pieces of legislation that were brought in by the previous government.

If you really take the time to look at this bill, and I have, and if you take the time to talk to workers in this province, and I have, as recently as last night—in fact, injured workers are the people I talked to last night. These are workers who are off the job because they were injured in the workplace and they are aware of this particular bill. They know that Bill 63 does nothing, nothing at all, for the lot of workers in Ontario. They know that their sisters and brothers, whether they're unionized or not, workers in Ontario will not have a better lot as a result of this particular bill.

I have to say to you that it would be the opinion of the members of this particular caucus that Bill 63 does nothing at all to provide changes to the system that existed under the previous government. It fails in very many ways to protect workers from things like coercion by the employer. It fails to guarantee workers a 40-hour workweek, which has been a long-standing desire of both organized labour and unorganized workers in Ontario. It fails in so many respects that it's actually kind of embarrassing to have to stand in this Legislature today and listen to the protestations of the government indicating that they think this bill does very positive things for workers in Ontario, and it absolutely does not.

It's actually quite disconcerting that we have to go through a protracted debate in this regard when we all know very well, as we sit in our seats and we read the bill and we read, quite frankly, the notes that come from the researchers that look into the fine details, that it's the devil in the details that makes the difference for workers in Ontario. In this particular bill those details do not spell positive, progressive reform in terms of hours of work. Everybody who's sitting in this chamber tonight knows that that's the truth.

What we really need in Ontario, and what can easily be done if the government was committed to progressive

labour law reform, is the instatement of a firm 40-hour workweek in the province of Ontario. It's really funny, because on the one hand, when we talk about things like pensions, we have the government saying, "You know, there are just not enough workers around to do the work." And on the other hand, "the workers that are there—we're going to make them work 60, 80, 100 hours a week." In fact, this bill provides opportunities for employers to put workers in a position where there's no cap on the amount of hours they can work. It's actually quite a regressive piece of legislation if you look at the details.

What we really need to see are real, specific changes around the mechanisms that would perhaps lead to the negotiations between worker and employer. The problem—and again, it's the detail—is that in such negotiations it's always the employer that has the upper hand. Why is that? The employer has the upper hand because it's the employer that has the piece of the equation that has the most power. It's the employer that can give or take the livelihood and the well-being of the workers and their ability to support themselves and their family.

In any situation where we talk about negotiations—I come from community social justice work, so I know very well the movement towards mediation and all these kinds of different ways of settling disputes. It's a basic, fundamental issue that is apparent in every negotiation of this type, the fact that there is one party that holds the upper hand and holds the power. Unless there's a system that balances that power and redresses that problem, then you have a system that is not going to work. It's particularly not going to work for the person who is at the bottom edge of that power imbalance. In Ontario, that means the worker. And you know what? That means the worker, regardless of whether that worker belongs to a trade union or whether they do not.

I can tell you that the people who are my friends in the labour movement are telling me they are extremely concerned about the fact that the unions are totally, totally opposed to this legislation. They are opposed to this legislation because they do not believe they have a rightful and appropriate spot in this particular negotiation.

I need to say to you that it's extremely important that this particular bill goes to an appropriate scrutiny at a committee level so that my friends—on my caucus, the NDP caucus, Trinity-Spadina, all of whom are here. In fact, we have Marilyn Churley, who's joined us just now; we have Gilles Bisson; we have Peter Kormos. All of these members are very much interested in making sure this bill gets the scrutiny it deserves. It needs to go to committee. It needs to have full debate. It needs to have people coming in to speak to it.

At this point in time, I forfeit the floor—and see that this bill gets put to committee and to a vote.

The Speaker: I presume that the member from Hamilton East has completed her speech?

Ms Horwath: Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm going to then ask for questions and comments, if she's completed her speech. Questions and comments?

2200

Hon Mr Caplan: I appreciate the comments of the member. I'm surprised to hear that the New Democrats do not support ending the 60-hour workweek, because they used to say that they did. That party used to say that they supported workers.

I remember that when they were government, each and every one of them voted for the social contract. They voted to end collective bargaining, strip contracts and rob workers of their rights. I remember when, back earlier in the spring, the members of the third party blocked family medical leave, a law which would allow workers the right to care for family members who were sick. I remember the pious, sanctimonious waves that came from over there.

It is very hard to take. Obviously, the member has not read the bill, because if the member had read the bill, the member would have known that it parallels the Employment Standards Act that was in place between 1990 and 1995 when her party was the government. So I, for one, am very surprised that the members of the third party do not support eliminating the 60-hour workweek.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I just heard the member opposite, and I would say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, this bill does not in any way, shape or form end the 60-hour workweek.

Mr Bisson: And you would know, Elizabeth. You're an honourable member.

Mrs Witmer: I would know, because I used to be the Minister of Labour, and if you check with lawyers, they will tell you this does not end the 60-hour workweek. This bill is wasteful. It goes back to the permit system that we used to have in the province of Ontario. It is very costly. What's going to happen is businesses will do to you what they did to the NDP: They will go elsewhere, and we'll lose 10,000 jobs.

Mr Kormos: Very briefly, and in the company of my colleagues in the NDP caucus Marilyn Churley, Rosario Marchese and Gilles Bisson, I say that the member from Hamilton East, Ms Horwath, has made it very clear that New Democrats are eager to see this bill go to committee, that she did not exhaust all of the time available to her. She was ceding the floor so that the bill could be put to a vote, and what does the deputy government House leader do?

Interjection: Filibusters.

Mr Kormos: Mr Caplan filibusters the government's own bill. You guys couldn't organize a drunk-up in a brewery. You guys are pathetic. You guys are hopeless. You guys are miserably inept. Ms Horwath has indicated that New Democrats are ready to let this bill go to a vote on second reading. We don't support it. I assume you do. Let's vote on it and see whether it's going to progress through the process. Don't filibuster your own legislation.

Mr O'Toole: I'm surprised. What the member from Hamilton East asked was a reasonable compromise at this time of the day. After some time, it appears the gov-

ernment's intransigent to even try to find a solution. She has proposed to you—it's quite simple—that she wants broader input from the stakeholders that, thus far, have not been consulted because of the ambiguities in the bill.

If you read it here—I'll just read one section in the very limited time. I'm reading from the bill itself, Bill 63, and it says right here—these are the weasel words that I find in it—"Employers are prohibited from requiring or permitting employees to work more than 48 hours in a workweek unless the employees have agreed to do so in writing."

Then I go down further here, and see in another preamble section it says, "Existing agreements to work hours in excess of the limits in the act continue to be valid"—so if they've agreed—"but are subject to the requirement to obtain an approval." What this does—I can just see it now. It's sort of like a call centre at the Ministry of Labour. Somebody there seven days a week, 24 hours a day, waiting for the call for permission to work, and they both have agreed. Consensual agreement on both sides is required; that's implicit.

What you're trying to do is actually slow down the economy of Ontario, and I think it's working. From the recent numbers, I think your plan to slow down the economy is working.

If I had more time, I would tell you what I've recently heard from Inco and others about the exceedingly exaggerated costs of electricity, one of their chief costs of doing business. The pulp and paper industry, the steel industry—you're shutting the economy down and you don't get it.

This is not just an example of failure to pass this bill; it's a failure to govern. It's embarrassing to be here and listen to the inaccuracies being articulated on the other side.

The Speaker: The member from Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I must admit that I'm a bit confused about what's happened here in the last little while. Quite frankly, it's my opinion that we've had some very positive debate on this bill. But, really, the next phase of this bill is to move it into committee, where it can get the scrutiny and debate it deserves.

I thought I had made that clear. I thought I opened an opportunity for the Liberals, the government, to deal with that. But do you know what? The bottom line is, they didn't take that opportunity. They fumbled that ball, and we're not necessarily going to be debating this any more.

We'd like to see this go to committee, where we can really deal with it in a very specific and very detailed way. There are a lot of stakeholders involved here who need to have the opportunity to have that discussion because, quite frankly, this bill is bad. It is not a positive and progressive bill; it does not do good things for workers in Ontario. Quite frankly, this bill can be voted on at this point in time and we can take it to committee.

I don't understand what happened here tonight. I think it's time that this bill moves to the next phase and gets to committee for scrutiny. We should be voting on it at this point in time.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's quite ironic, we hear honourable members say they want this to get to committee, and yet they persist in delaying debate. I think it's important for those people viewing at home—I would encourage them to pick up the phone and contact the House leaders of the two opposition parties for the disrespectful way they are treating the citizens of Ontario. The citizens of Ontario have sent us here to do a job, and all the opposition members do is try to find ways to put roadblocks in place. I think it's time that we got on with business, that we started dealing with the business of this Legislature.

I move that the question be now put.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: New Democrats concur, as the member Ms Horwath was trying to say: Let's put this bill to a vote so we can get it into committee.

The Speaker: I have listened very carefully, and I understand that the government now is asking that the motion be put. The indication and my sense of it all is that the opposition also wants it to be put. So I will entertain the motion of the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Mr Peters moves that the motion be now put.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes—

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2210 to 2240.

The Speaker: Mr Peters has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Churley, Marilyn	Kular, Kuldip	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Mossop, Jennifer F.	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Ouellette, Jerry J.
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 2.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

On June 9, Mr Bentley moved second reading of Bill 63. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Bentley for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters, be deferred until Monday, November 1, 2004.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM
CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME
DE PERFECTIONNEMENT
PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignants et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member who had the floor the last time is not here, so I think—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Whoa. I had the floor.

The Speaker: Order. My understanding is that it was the Conservatives who had the floor the last time.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Speaker: Let me just state what I'm going to say before your point of order.

I understand that the Conservatives had the floor the last time, and the member is not here. The rotation is now to the third party. I understand that the member from Timmins-James Bay—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): No, he has spoken already.

The Speaker: Order. Is the member from Niagara Centre standing up now for further debate?

Mr Kormos: I'm not sitting down, am I? I'm standing, Speaker, ready to speak to this bill.

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: It's a pleasure, at the hour of a quarter to 11 on Thursday night, to be speaking to Bill 82 for the modest 10 minutes allowed me.

I have found it to be of some interest, the way and the manner in which this government, now a year and a few days into its term, still fails to understand the role of members of this Legislative Assembly, the role of individual members; how this government, with its huge majority, still, with a tyro's ineffectiveness, is incapable of managing the business of this House, and indeed has developed a backlog of legislation that is an embarrassment and a revelation of the utter incompetence of this government and its leadership.

It is remarkable that after a year and change, the government House Leader, the government whip, the deputy House leader, the deputy whip, the assistant deputy House leader and the assistant deputy whip—and it could go on and on—don't understand that you pass

legislation when you've got a majority government by calling the bill, by having it debated, and when the debate's over, it goes to a vote. Then, assuming the whip has done his or her job getting members in, with a majority government, the legislation passes. It passes second reading and then it may go to committee.

Once it's discharged from committee, it goes back to the House, and when the House leader calls it, and not before—opposition members can't call government business and, quite frankly, we're not inclined to. It's not our function to set priorities for this government. It's not my function to help the government House leader, to take him by his hand, to open the standing orders and show him, page by page, "Government House leader, these are the rules. This is how it's done." It's not my job. The government House leader could take an afternoon, maybe, take out his standing orders and learn how bills get passed. They get passed when the government calls them, when they're submitted to the Legislature for debate, and when that debate is over, when they're put to a vote.

I want to make it clear, however much I bemoan the fact that there are but eight New Democrats—and now we have Andrea Horwath from Hamilton East. I understand that the election of Andrea Horwath continues to be a matter of some despair for so many Liberals. We're grateful to Andrea and we're grateful to the folks of Hamilton East for ensuring that New Democrats here at Queen's Park got party status, but I want to tell you—and, like the guy on the cooking channel says, "It ain't rocket science"—when we've only got eight members, we can't block legislation.

I want to explain it to you. I'm going to do it very slowly. It's in the standing orders. You can look it up in the index if you're so inclined. A leadoff speech by an opposition critic is one hour. Subsequent comments by his or her colleagues in this eight-member caucus are 20 minutes apiece and at some point but 10 minutes each. You do the math. Even if and when every member of this caucus speaks to any given piece of legislation at any stage of its progress through this House, you're talking about, at a maximum, a couple of hours and change of debate time. That's it. It's physics. It's scientific. It's not—well, it's not debatable. You calculate the time and that's the amount of time.

I can't help it if your government House leader loses bills so that he doesn't call them for weeks and months at a time. It's not my business. It's not my concern. And I have no intention of doing the government House leader's work for him.

Are there people in his caucus who are more capable than he is? I'm sure there are. I'm looking across the aisle at Ted McMeekin, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, and although he would be loath to blow his own horn, I can tell by his body language and by his demeanour that that member thinks he's more capable than the government House leader by a long shot. Ted McMeekin, with one arm tied behind his back, could do what the government House leader—he could do it standing on his head. I have no hesitation in saying that.

Dare I speak to the skills of other members of the assembly?

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Not me.

Mr Kormos: One modestly shakes his head and says, "No, not today. Not me." He doesn't want to steal the spotlight. He doesn't want to monopolize the front pages of the papers. I understand. He's a modest person. So I won't speak to that member's inherent skills, which clearly qualify him far beyond the capacity of the government House leader to perform that House leader's role. As a matter of fact, if Dr Qaadri had been organizing the House business, we'd be on our Christmas break already. I have no hesitation in saying that. He is a talented man. And I tell you, I know he's literate. We can tell every time he speaks that he's well read. He is. I say that not mockingly or condescendingly; I have regard for him in that regard. If Dr Qaadri were government House leader, well, we'd be contemplating how we were going to spend our Christmas vacation right now instead of sitting here till midnight.

Do you know what's amazing? It's that now we're into the—Ms Wynne's shaking her head in amazement. She's concerned because I have detailed the skills of two of her male colleagues and omitted her. No, Ms Wynne, I'm not going to tout you as being capable of being government House leader because your skills are far in excess of what's required of a government House leader. You surely could be a parliamentary assistant to the Premier. You surely could be a Deputy Premier. And it'd be refreshing to see one of the young new Turks, young blood, in the party and in the caucus, sitting beside this Premier. Lord knows, he needs all the help he can get.

I want to say this to you: I'm looking forward to the 10 minutes of questions and comments. But before we do that, can we please, please, gather together in our seats and, exercising the opportunities that we have—a moment or perhaps a few to reflect—can we please consider a motion to adjourn the House?

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2253 to 2323.

The Speaker: Mr Kormos has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please rise.

All those against, please rise.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The ayes are 11; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Kormos is on.

Mr Kormos: I have but one minute and 30 seconds left. Then, of course, we'll have 10 minutes of questions and comments, should members wish to avail themselves of that 10 minutes. And then I presume a Liberal will be standing and speaking to the bill. Once a Liberal speaks

to it, I presume a Conservative will. Once a Conservative speaks to it, why, a New Democrat will. But you see, there are only eight New Democrats, and we can't make this debate last forever.

I feel for the government.

Interjection: Do you share the pain?

Mr Kormos: I share the pain of a government House leader who is subjected, my goodness, to having his bills debated. What a novel proposition.

It's interesting to observe that in four nights of midnight sittings not a single bill has passed but with the consent of the opposition. Four nights of sitting midnights and not a single bill has passed but with the consent of the opposition.

Had these bills been called in the normal course of events, I put to you that at least three or four would have passed, perhaps even more. I was in this House, like one or two others, at a time when there were no time restrictions on debate, when debate went on for hours, and sometimes days and weeks, but more legislation was passed than you guys ever have in the last 12 months—something to reflect on.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I just wanted to thank the member from Niagara Centre for his comments. I look forward to further debate on this matter, if the opposition wishes to do so.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I deliberately stayed here this evening. On Bill 82 there's so much more to be said. Mr Klees today did ask a question to the Minister of Education with respect to protecting the safety of children in our schools. He deflected the question to the Minister of Energy, because it was an issue relevant to energy issues, of course, but it just showed the lack of accountability and the lack of ability to manage an issue that came up when it involved children's safety.

In the case of Bill 82, what it's trying to do is to give complete control to Earl Manners and his sort, the teacher union bosses. I say this with some compassion and some conviction because many of you would know from the past 10 years that my wife indeed is a teacher, as is my daughter a high school teacher. I know how hard they work.

I honestly think that if you read Bill 82, you'll find they're really demeaning the profession. What they're trying to do is say that the college should not have functions over the union. That's really what it says. The college should, in its function—Mr Speaker, you would know that all professions, by definition, are self-regulating. That is, they enforce their own standards, and the disciplinary functions are usually allocated to the college, whether it's physicians and surgeons or indeed lawyers. The law society would perform their function, and there would be a professional enforcement group.

When they are trying to become—in this day of an education economy and an education society, I believe that teachers want to continue their education, to be recognized for it. But if you read Professionally Speaking, which is the teachers' magazine, there were ad-

vertisements there that were going to penalize teachers who participated in improvements.

I know how hard they work as a profession, and many would make the argument that they work way too hard. I know my wife and many teachers. I respect them. This bill does nothing but respond to the teacher unions.

Mr Bisson: I have some respect for the teacher unions in the sense that I believe as a New Democrat that workers have the right to associate by way of a union and negotiate with their employer the ability to get a collective agreement. But that's for another debate.

However, on this particular bill I want to say, as a New Democrat, that I support the intent of what the government is trying to do here. We agree with the government that in fact this particular issue of mandatory participation of teachers in training is out of step with what's happening with every other profession, and I spoke to that the other night.

However, I do believe there are some issues that need to be dealt with at committee, and I believe this bill has got to be referred to committee. I think that is important, because there are a couple of issues that my good friend our critic for education, Mr Rosario Marchese, raised that I think need to be spoken to.

2330

I want to speak to the comments of my good friend Mr Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre. This government has been quite confusing, I think, in their approach to how they bring legislation to this House. They decided, for whatever reason, to call midnight sittings at the beginning of the session. Normally, we never get that. Everybody in this assembly knows we get midnight sessions at the end of the session, not at the beginning of a session. This government, for whatever strange reason, decided to bring in midnight sittings at the beginning of the session and then wondered why the opposition was somewhat upset about that. Then they try to jam a whole whack of bills through the House in some sort of programming motion that would allow them to get virtually what they want.

As a New Democrat, I want to say that we're not interested in holding up your agenda and not allowing you to govern and pass your bills. We think it's important that all members of the assembly get an opportunity to debate the bills, so we have an opportunity to put on the record our supporting and objecting points on them, but then, if necessary, to bring a bill to committee to allow it to move forward. I would suggest that if the government allowed due process to happen, they would have far more bills passed in this House this week than they've accomplished with this pretty dumb process.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Bill 82 is an important piece of legislation. We're happy to be here at 11:30 on a Thursday night debating it, and we look forward to hearing questions and comments from across the aisle.

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has two minutes.

Mr Kormos: The parliamentary assistant to the Premier, while she was feigning joy, could at least have been happy for the whole two minutes allowed her. But I appreciate her joy, I appreciate her glee, I appreciate her pleasure and I appreciate her vigour here at 11:30 on Thursday night.

And I appreciate that Ms Broten, the parliamentary assistant to the Premier and the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, would be a far better government House leader than what her colleagues have had to suffer for the last year. Ms Broten, whose work I've witnessed, can think analytically. Ms Broten understands things like statutes and standing orders. Ms Broten, for instance, in her year and change here has acquired, at a visceral, a gut level, a feel for how bills become law. This is sort of like Civics 101. Again, Ms Broten, with one hand tied behind her back, could outperform the current government House leader hands down.

Ms Broten could get bills passed. She knows that you get bills passed by calling them; that once you call them, you debate them; that when people are finished debating them, they go to a vote; and that if the government whip is organized and gets his people out, then the government whip is successful at using the majority to pass the bill. I want to make it quite clear—I know Ms Broten's humility; perhaps she's embarrassed at the praise being heaped upon her. I also suspect that some of it may appear, albeit in an edited form, in her next newsletter. But I'm prepared to say, here and now, Ms Broten for House leader.

The Speaker: The member from Don Valley East.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It's indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 82, introduced by my colleague Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, back on May 13. It's been subsequently debated on June 16, October 19, October 25, October 26 and of course today, October 28. We've debated this for nine hours. In fact, we've had indication from the third party that they support the bill, and yet, on three occasions, they have moved adjournment to try to block passage of this bill.

We've had the official opposition—I understand their opposition; this undoes something they did when they were in government, and I appreciate their opposition to it. They too have tried to block passage of this bill.

Just so everybody understands—for the people who are viewing at home—the actions of the member from Timmins, Mr Bisson, belie his words. I must say there is obviously no interest in seeing passage of the bill when the member himself has twice moved adjournment of the debate and of the House in an attempt to block passage of this bill. The New Democrats say one thing and do something else.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Caplan: The truth hurts, my friend, but that is the case.

That being the case, I move that the question be now put.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2335 to 0005.

The Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John

Mossop, Jennifer F.
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim
Qaadri, Shafiq
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Dunlop, Garfield
Horwath, Andrea

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
O'Toole, John

Scott, Laurie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 24; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

On June 16, Mr Kennedy moved second reading of Bill 82. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It is therefore referred to committee of the whole House.

It being after 12 of the clock midnight, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 0008.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Monday 1 November 2004

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} Novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is my pleasure to welcome members of the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association to the Ontario Legislature today. They will be hosting a reception in the dining room later this afternoon and evening. All MPPs, their staff and media are welcome and encouraged to attend.

I would like to introduce you to Bill Top, president of the ODEFA organization, his wife, Jayne, and vice-president of ODEFA, Todd Grignon.

ODEFA is here today educating MPPs on the economic importance of their industry. On August 16 this year, Minister David Ramsay announced his intention to remove harvesting parks in Ontario, by regulation, not legislation. Although the deer and elk farmers of Ontario have, over the last 20 years, invested millions of dollars in this industry at the encouragement of previous provincial and federal governments, this government is about to destroy the industry with a swipe of the pen.

I ask Mr Ramsay and Mr Peters, as they expropriate this industry, what is their compensation package? Neither Ramsay nor Peters have replied to my invitation to visit the Universal Game Farm in Coldwater. Neither Ramsay nor Peters has responded to my request for compensation for this industry.

It is important to note that as a government, Dalton McGuinty has found millions of dollars to purchase private MRI clinics that were working perfectly well, but he can't find the money to compensate farmers whose livelihoods he has expropriated. He can't find the money to keep the Frost Centre educational facility open, a facility that educates our young people on the wilderness. Dalton McGuinty doesn't mind taking gas tax away from rural Ontario residents and funnelling it into urban centres.

Again, McGuinty and Peters have kicked rural Ontario residents, and rural Ontario will not forget their shabby treatment.

SAFE COMMUNITIES OF PICKERING AND AJAX

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise today to acknowledge and commend the actions of

an organization called SCOPA, Safe Communities of Pickering and Ajax, currently chaired by Mr Jim McKinnon of Dupont Canada. SCOPA is a not-for-profit organization that offers or sponsors programs that reduce work-related injury and promote health and safety among children, youth and seniors in the community. It's a genuine partnership of more than 50 groups, including the municipalities, provincial agencies, local businesses, the board of trade, police and emergency services, and boards of education, to reference but a few.

SCOPA works with all ages to ensure a high level of safety for the Pickering-Ajax community. Programs such as the falls prevention program teach older persons how to avoid falls. Falls are the number one cause of injuries for older persons in the Pickering-Ajax area, and SCOPA hopes a program like this will reduce these devastating injuries.

SCOPA has also been a staunch advocate of safety strategies for youth, like the passport-to-safety initiative. Mr Speaker, I'm sure you're aware that young workers have the highest risk of injuries on the job. Upon the completion of the passport-to-safety program, young people are knowledgeable as to how to protect themselves from injury on the job, and employers benefit from having access to workers who are responsible and who follow the health and safety policies and practices in the workplace.

I'm proud to be the MPP of a riding that has such an organization in its midst. Because of the dedication to the community shown by SCOPA, the riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge will continue of be one of the safest for all ages at home, at play and at work.

COLLEGE WEEK

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am proud to stand before you today to recognize College Week 2004. I am one of the more than one million graduates to have benefited from a college education. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Honourable Bill Davis, the former Premier of the province of Ontario, the founding father of the college system in Ontario.

Ontario has 21 colleges of applied arts and technology and three institutes of technology and advanced learning. They serve 155,000 full-time students and 350,000 part-time students. This year, during College Week, the colleges are celebrating the success of their graduates.

We should be celebrating with them. Colleges employ approximately 30,000 people, and their presence is felt in 200 communities across the province. Our colleges pro-

vide high-quality, innovative courses that help to educate the highly skilled workforce that is essential to the future prosperity of this province.

Colleges offer a broad array of certificates and diploma programs in addition to applied degree programs. Ontario college graduates are health care professionals, designers, builders, technologists, journalists, CEOs and even MPPs.

We are also involved in hundreds of other kinds of careers. College graduates are on the front lines and behind the scenes, making our world work every day. We need to recognize the important work that they do in helping us to build Ontario's economy.

Today, the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technologies is hosting a reception here at Queen's Park. I hope that many of you will take the opportunity to learn more about our colleges and the important role they play in providing real careers for real life.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have been travelling around the province a little bit to substantiate the claim that the Minister of Education is making that he is giving away equitable allocation through a new funding model for student transportation in Ontario.

This is what I'm discovering. There are two kinds of boards: one board that's getting an increase of funding and the other type of board that's getting whacked. So we're discovering that half of the boards are getting more money and the other half of the boards are going to get less money.

What we're also discovering is that it can't be much of a discussion, the other claim that the Minister of Education is making, when those boards that are getting an increase next year are already getting an allocation and the other half of the boards that are not getting any money are planning for the decreases the following year.

We're discovering that there are two kind of boards: those who are going to lose money and are going to get whacked and the other boards that are going to get an increase. I look at the title of this paper, and it says "equitable allocation" of money. I just don't see how it can be equitable when half of the boards are getting whacked and the other half are getting more money. You understand, Speaker? I just don't see the fairness of whacking some and not whacking the others or giving more to everyone equally. I just don't see it.

1340

COLLEGE WEEK

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I too rise in the House today to recognize Ontario College Week and to acknowledge representatives from the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology who are with us today. Ontario's colleges have more than 100 campuses across the province,

and my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is fortunate and proud to have St Lawrence College and its president, Mr Volker Thomsen.

Colleges play a crucial role in providing the knowledge and skills that Ontario needs to be successful. To support post-secondary education, apprenticeship and training programs, our government has committed \$4.2 billion in 2004-05. This represents a \$260-million increase in operational spending, and it is a welcome departure from the years of government underfunding and neglect.

Ontario's colleges have consistently voiced concern over the accessibility to college programs, including apprenticeships. Our government has listened. We will increase accessibility, and this is how we will do it: Tuition fees have been frozen for two years, and post-secondary institutions will be compensated for costs resulting from the tuition freeze. There is new funding to create an additional 7,000 apprenticeships and a proposed tax credit to encourage businesses to hire and train more apprentices in the skilled trades. Our government has also begun a groundbreaking review of higher education in the province, and all Ontarians anxiously await the release of the Rae report this January.

Dedication and leadership are working in this province, and we acknowledge the hard work of Minister Chambers and the Premier in post-secondary education.

HEALTH CARE

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I rise today to remind the people of Ontario that today is indeed a sad one for health care in our province.

Today the promise-breaking McGuinty government begins its backdoor plan to deceitfully introduce two-tier health care to Ontario. Today the first stage of delisting—you know, providing less for more—will be implemented by this Liberal government: eye tests today, chiropractor treatments on November 30 and physiotherapy treatments on March 31, 2005.

In a survey in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, fully 96% of respondents said McGuinty was wrong.

One resident of my riding, Joanna Szymanski, has been disabled for 19 years because of various forms of rheumatoid disease related to soft and hard tissue affecting both her joints and bones. Ms Szymanski has stated that she struggles to keep mobile. She has been able to stay out of a wheelchair only because of chiropractic and physiotherapy treatments. She cannot afford to pay for these services, but will be forced to do so if the McGuinty government goes ahead with their plan.

The feds are handing over extra health care dollars. The government is taking money out of people's pockets in the form of a new health tax—another broken promise. With this new revenue, there is no need to proceed with the delisting of services.

I urge the minister to abandon this idea now. Admit that you were wrong; otherwise, the legacy of this government will indeed be "less for more."

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I rise today to inform the House that on Friday, October 22, a major announcement was made in Thunder Bay. My colleagues and I, joined by the mayor, announced that for the first time ever, Thunder Bay was set to receive almost \$1 million in gas tax funding this year. With this new funding, Thunder Bay will be able to better plan and manage their transit needs. Public transit was neglected for years by previous governments. Previous governments sat by and watched while commute times increased for many and our environment worsened.

By making this announcement, we have delivered on our commitment to dedicate two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax to municipalities by investing over \$680 million in public transit over three years. This money will go a long way toward encouraging the citizens of Thunder Bay as well as the entire province to use public transit as an alternative to driving.

The population of Thunder Bay is approximately 112,000 people, spread out over a very large geographic area. With such a scenario, it can be quite expensive to provide transit to the people of Thunder Bay. With this money from our government, our city should find the challenge of providing transit to such a geographically large region much more manageable.

Currently, the annual ridership in Thunder Bay is almost 2.8 million. With almost \$1 million this year for transit for our city, we can increase ridership even more. The gas tax funding could be used for new buses, routes, services or new infrastructure. The mayor and council will have to make that determination.

Mayors and independent organizations have all been hailing this announcement as long overdue.

Roger Anderson of AMO says, "It's the first time in the history of the province of Ontario that there's a permanent source of revenue from gas tax, and we're very pleased to see it."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'd like to say a few words on Tory math. We heard from them throughout the election that there was no deficit. The current member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey said so every day of the election. But his math was off—off by \$5.5 billion.

Now it appears that John Tory, the aspiring member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, seems to be inheriting some numeracy problems of his own. You see, last week Mr Tory made a major gaffe in Ottawa by inflating hospital deficits, according to the Ottawa Citizen. This is the same party that closed the Grace and the Riverside in Ottawa, tried to close down the Montfort and downsize CHEO.

Perhaps if the aspiring member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey were spending more time here in the House with us, he would know that hospital budgets have increased by more than \$1 billion over the first year of

the McGuinty government. In the infamous Tory Magna budget, the PCs budgeted to give \$700 million less to hospitals had they stayed in power.

The Ottawa Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario both said Tory's math was wrong. A health economist at the University of Ottawa said the numbers were "really high. I suspect they are playing with the numbers. This is an outlandishly high figure. That's virtually impossible to see. They are so far off base on that one. There is no way. It's impossible."

During their time in government, Premier Eves said people should be able to buy their way to the front of the health care line. Health Minister two-tier Tony said the same thing.

Why is Tory floating these outlandishly high deficit numbers? He publicly supports greater privatization of the health care system. Is he now hoping to scare Ontarians into supporting a two-tier alternative?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to make a statement today in the presence of the grade 10 civics class from St Ignatius of Loyola.

I want to bring to the attention of this House today an announcement made by the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade last Friday at the Ford plant in Oakville. They jointly announced a more than \$1-billion flexible, state-of-the-art, manufacturing facility for the Oakville plant. This is an investment in the future. It brings a sense of security for workers. For far too long, workers in this province have taken a back seat. Finally, they've got a Premier and a government that values industry and the skilled workforce that drives our economy.

I'd like to share with you the words of Buzz Hargrove, who was at the announcement on Friday. Let me quote: "I never was so happy in my life to see the tail end of Jim Flaherty and others who poisoned the air for this industry for far too long.... I want to compliment Dalton McGuinty.... I also want to compliment Joe Cordiano, who's been incredibly supportive every step of the way.... Joe Cordiano is one hell of a guy."

This investment was long overdue. I want to join Mr Hargrove in thanking the Premier and the minister for recognizing the auto industry, and to tell you that I share this sentiment that our Premier "recognized the auto industry was the best team for Ontario. And he stood by his word" and put a lot of money in "to invest in the future of this plant."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I beg leave to present a report on the review of emergency management

law in Ontario from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Colle: In all, the committee heard in person or by teleconferencing from 92 people, 88 of them representing 53 organizations, including Ontario ministries. Written testimony was received from three individuals on behalf of 17 organization which did not appear.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee and staff, who spent the last four months over the summer deliberating over very important business in Ontario; that is, getting Ontario ready in case this province faces another unprecedented emergency. I would like to thank everybody for getting involved.

With that, I'd like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All members in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Please be seated.

All those against, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to amend the Emergency Management Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 138, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la gestion des situations d'urgence et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Colle?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This legislation, if passed, is designed for extraordinary circumstances and rare use when an immediate and comprehensive provincial response is required to protect the people of Ontario during a provincial emergency. There have only been two provincial emergencies declared in Ontario's history: the SARS outbreak and the electricity blackout, both in 2003. Those two provincial emer-

gencies—along with the ice storm of 1998, and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States—have focused public attention on the adequacy of Ontario's emergency powers.

This act, if passed, will clearly define the lines of authority to be exercised to manage a provincial emergency. Its purpose is to promote the public good by protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Ontario in such a manner that respects the rights of Ontario citizens, while ensuring a rapid and coordinated response by our government when an extraordinary emergency occurs in Ontario.

1400

REMEMBRANCE DAY OBSERVANCE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBSERVATION DU JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act respecting the observance of Remembrance Day / Projet de loi 139, Loi traitant de l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Lalonde.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The bill extends the scope of the Remembrance Day Observance Act, 1997, to require schools in Ontario to commemorate Remembrance Day by playing the Last Post, followed by two minutes of silence and no school activities. Every school board shall require schools within the board's jurisdiction to observe the protocol described in section 2 at 11 am on Remembrance Day, if that day falls on a school day, or the day closest to Remembrance Day, if that day does not fall on a school day.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ACCÈS À L'INFORMATION ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act with respect to community care access corporations / Projet de loi 140, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'accès aux soins communautaires.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Martel.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The bill responds to a request that was made by the Ontario Federation of Labour to Premier McGuinty in a letter dated October 6,

2004. That letter referenced a specific example where the OFL had made a request to the Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington CCAC for information regarding service directions and service agreements between the CCAC and the government, the provincial templates for request for proposal documents, requests for proposals issued by the CCAC and the responses, and other documents that related to the operation of the CCAC. The request for information was denied by the CCAC on the basis that the CCAC is not an institution as defined by the regulations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, so they were not obligated to respond.

My bill would ensure that CCACs are subject to the provisions of the act so that important information regarding home care and home care delivery is made available to the public.

VISITOR

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: These proceedings today are being listened to and carefully watched by Mr Custodio Barros, who is representing the Benfica sports club from Portugal.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's not a point of order.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm till 9:30 pm on Monday, November 1, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 190. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1409.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 190. All those in favour, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Baird, John R.
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael

Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jackson, Cameron
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave

Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Monique

Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craiton, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John

Marsales, Judy
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry
Qadri, Shafiq

Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Sterling, Norman W.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wong, Tony C.
Yakabuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise to be counted.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Horwath, Andrea

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martiniuk, Gerry
Murdoch, Bill
Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 67; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm sure members of the House will recall that on February 25, 2004, Premier McGuinty announced \$10 million for Ontario's cull animal strategy. This strategy is designed to assist our cattle industry to overcome the fallout from the BSE crisis by addressing both the short and the long term. Its immediate goal was to help producers move their surplus mature animals. Its longer-term goal is to build slaughter capacity in this province, and that's where the \$7-million mature animal fund comes in. By investing in projects that will build meat-processing capacity in the province, the Ontario government is boosting our livestock industry.

This morning I had the great pleasure of visiting one of the recipients of funding under phase one of the mature animal fund. West Grey Premium Beef is a provincially licensed abattoir in Durham, Ontario. This facility is a great example of a "gate to plate" partnership, locally owned and operated to serve the farmers and consumers of Grey and Bruce counties. It's also a great example of the willingness of the province's agricultural industry to work with government to reposition and strengthen our beef industry and help to build domestic slaughter capacity in this province.

While at West Grey Premium Meats, it was my privilege to announce that, through the second phase of the mature animal fund, another four Ontario abattoirs will receive assistance. They are Holly Park Meat Packers,

based in Bolton; Scheel Packers in Pakenham; Aman's Abattoir in Wellington; and Rideau Meats in Smiths Falls.

This initiative is working. Ontario's cattle industry is already benefiting from the funds invested in phase one. West Grey, for instance, applied the funds to buy new equipment, upgrade their facilities, and implement a hazard analysis control point plan, which will broaden their market reach.

The McGuinty government is helping West Grey increase their slaughter capacity. They are now killing an average of 215 more cows per month. Another stage one funding recipient, Gencor Foods, has also ramped up its capacity to 2,000 animals a month.

We are making good progress. When all the projects under the first two stages are fully implemented, overall slaughter capacity in Ontario will reach well over 6,000 animals a month.

The McGuinty government has also added a third stage to the mature animal fund. In addition to increasing slaughter capacity for cull animals, stage three will also benefit other segments of the ruminant livestock industry impacted by trade restrictions that have resulted from the BSE crisis. People often think it's the beef industry that's been affected. But it has been the dairy industry, the cattle industry; it's been sheep, it's been goats, it's been deer and elk. Those individuals are here today.

I am also extremely proud to be part of the McGuinty government. Despite the financial tightrope that we must walk to stay on track and reduce the provincial deficit, this government continues to deliver much-needed assistance to our farmers. Most recently, the Premier announced that up to \$30 million would be available to cattle producers to help them cover the costs of holding back livestock from the marketplace. The goal of these set-aside programs, as they are called, is to help producers realize a better price for their cattle by managing the flow of cattle to slaughter.

We know that the real solution to this crisis is to fully re-establish trade with the United States and our other partners. We will work with our partners in the federal government and the industry to help us achieve that goal. We will continue to do our part to help increase the prosperity of the people of Ontario by working with the agri-food sector to retain and grow existing businesses, attract new investment and develop new markets, both at home and around the world. All of Ontario reaps the benefits of a strong, sustainable agricultural industry.

I would like to ask members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating the four successful processors and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. To every one of you, when you go into the grocery store, make that conscious decision: Buy local, buy Ontario. That's the one way we can really help our industry.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I rise today to respond to the Stand-

ing committee on finance and economic affairs and its review of the Five-Year Review Committee's report on the Ontario Securities Act. I thank the members of this committee for their unanimous support that they presented here on October 18.

This is a very solid report. It recognizes the need for investors to have confidence that their investments and interests are being well protected.

The committee made 14 specific recommendations. I have no major concerns with the direction of any of them. We will move on half of these now, or in the very near future. The others will require further input from stakeholders and the public.

The committee strongly recommends that the Ontario government continue to pursue a single securities regulator for Canada. Canada is the only developed country without some form of common regulator, and this is Ontario's number one securities reform priority. We are following this recommendation by persistently working toward this goal with stakeholders and the responsible ministers in other provinces and territories.

The committee recommends ensuring that there are strong incentives for public companies and other participants in our capital markets to do the right thing, and that when there are problems, all of our investors should have timely and affordable means to seek redress.

This brings us to a second major recommendation of the committee; that is, civil liability for secondary markets. Civil liability gives investors the right to sue companies for misleading disclosures or fraudulent actions. Similar rights already exist in the primary market. This means that investors can sue now, if, for example, there are false or misleading statements in a prospectus on an initial public offering. But currently, investors do not have the same rights, after the initial public offering, in the trading that occurs every day in our markets, and that is where the vast majority of trades occur. We will be proposing legislation very soon to strengthen investor protection by implementing civil liability for secondary markets.

The committee also recommended a change in the timing of the five-year reviews of Ontario's Securities Act—and we will propose legislation to do that this fall as well. Without a change, we would have to begin the next Securities Act review within a matter of months, before we have had a chance to fully respond to the first review.

Other recommendations we accept relate to basket rule-making, blanket rulings and orders, and the regulation of market participants.

We are acting immediately on seven of the recommendations. For the other half, we will be seeking input from investors and the financial community in the coming months.

The committee recommended the government establish a task force to review the role of self-regulatory organizations, or SROs, as they are commonly known. That would give us an opportunity to respond to those who appeared before the committee and expressed their

concerns with the current SRO system. The task force would work toward improving the current system, and in doing so would instill greater investor protection and confidence in our capital market.

1420

The committee also recommended that the adjudicative function of the Ontario Securities Commission be separated from the other functions.

The Five-Year Review Committee and the Fairness—or Osborne—Committee confirmed that there is no evidence of bias currently in OSC proceedings. The government has confidence in the OSC, but even the best organizations must strive to improve and be better. We will address these issues in a way that does not compromise the effectiveness of our regulatory system.

The committee has also recommended more formal and regular reporting to the Legislature by the Ontario Securities Commission and by the minister responsible for the OSC. We will be looking hard at ways to develop improved OSC oversight mechanisms that are in line with this recommendation.

To sum up, there will be a staged response to the 14 recommendations put forward by the committee.

For phase one, now or in the very near future we'll move on seven of the recommendations, including the civil liability for secondary market disclosure and on changing the timing of the five-year reviews.

Phase two involves near-term actions such as proceeding with a number of consultations the committee has called for, including a task force to review the role of SROs, self-regulatory organizations.

Phase three—we'll deal with items where progress is required in the next 12 months, including the OSC accountability mechanism, restitution, and beginning to look in earnest at a separate adjudicative tribunal for the OSC.

Phase four is the ongoing work on new laws to be developed and implemented.

We will continue to improve the structure and substance of our securities regulation system, with a focus on investor protection and maintaining confidence in our capital markets.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to compliment the Minister of Agriculture on his announcement, and as he suggested in his announcement, I want to congratulate the applicants who were successful in getting money to help upgrade their abattoirs to increase the capacity for cull cow processing.

I can only say that I wish there were more of them, that there were more available, that we could increase their capacity even faster, because, as the minister has pointed out a number of times, it is the only solution until the border is open, it is the only solution for our cow cull program and for the farmers who are in dire straits because not only can they not sell them, they can't even

get rid of them. So they are obligated to feed them, knowing they will not get a return even on the feed they are putting into these animals. So I think it is a very important step to increase the capacity for these animals.

I think it is also very important that we look at those farmers who will not benefit from this capacity at this time but who have a lot of cows they can't get rid of that they will need to address—again, as I mentioned, the feed going into them and not getting a return on the feed. We need to look at some type of program to help those farmers.

Having said that, what I am most pleased with in the announcement is the minister's commitment to phase three of the mature cow program, which he suggests will be used for other industries and other things in our rural communities that are suffering the consequences of the BSE dilemma and will benefit from the program, such as has been mentioned in this House a number of times, the sales barns in our rural community that cannot move these animals through. They are going out of business because of the BSE program, with no assistance from the government. So I think this is very good news for those people.

Also, in my community there are many dairy farmers who have to get rid of their stock live, and for many years have been exporting it across the border and can no longer do that. None of these programs benefit them because they can't market the live animals in any way through these programs. So hopefully, the third phase will indeed help them do a little bit of that.

Lastly, I would just like to ask the minister—I noticed the statement talked about capacity in the province, and it kept talking about the total capacity. It would be helpful to the people in our communities to know whether that was increased capacity or whether it was the total capacity in the province.

Again, I want to thank the minister for the announcement. I do hope the people who are getting the money can move forward very quickly and get that capacity on stream for the farmers in my community.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): May I respond to the Chair of Management Board and his comments about the OSC.

Purdy Crawford is an eminent person in the province of Ontario. He worked for five years on this review and presented it to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. All parties represented in this House presented a unanimous report, and what they get from the government today is a mealy-mouthed lack of commitment and no courage.

The two major recommendations in the report are the national securities regulator—they didn't even sign the MOU when they had the opportunity to with four other provinces recently. Their commitment—and here's the big commitment now; after five years of work by Purdy Crawford, here's the government's commitment: They're

going to work toward the goal. That's the commitment. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Investors in Ontario expect more of a government that purports to have some familiarity with the importance of securities regulation and investment in this province. We are the only jurisdiction around that has multiple regulators, and we are only a population of 32 million or so in Canada. This is urgent. The issue of capital and raising capital on investment for small and large investors is urgent.

The other important point is about separating the adjudicative function and the regulatory function at the Ontario Securities Commission. The minister says that Osborne, in his report, confirmed that there's no evidence of bias in the OSC. He also recommended that the functions be separated. Why don't you say that to the people of Ontario and then why don't you do it? This work has gone on over five years. We may get to the point that you'll have to give it back to the minister—no, you can't do that; that's the Royal Group Technologies thing. But you've got that responsibility for the Ontario Securities Commission. You know that there are issues there about the adjudicative regulatory function. You know that it has to be dealt with urgently if you want small and larger investors to have confidence in the Ontario Securities Commission.

I say, move forward on those two vitally important points, as recommended by Mr Crawford and his committee and by the unanimous committee of this House.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It was indeed a privilege for me and an honour to serve on the finance committee. As has already been stated, the finance committee unanimously recommended the 14 recommendations which are the subject of the minister's statement here today.

On that finance committee, from dozens of ordinary citizens—people in this province who were dissatisfied with how the Ontario Securities Commission is regulated, how it works and what has happened to them—we heard in evidence that this past year there were 262 files opened on alleged transgressions. These were not small transgressions; these were large transgressions where people were able to take advantage because of insider trading and other, I think, nefarious and uncalled-for actions in order to try and rip ordinary investors off.

The committee has made two key recommendations taken from the body of evidence before it; the first was for a single regulator. There's no question that Canada needs a single regulator. The problem is, how are we going to get there? Canada is not unique in the world, in spite of what some others have said. There is one other country that has many regulators, and that's Bosnia-Herzegovina. But I'm not sure that we want to go there as well. Canada is alone among about 100 industrialized countries that do not have a single regulator.

The second recommendation we made that needs to be acted on sooner rather than later is to separate the adjudicative function. The Fairness Committee under Coulter Osborne spoke quite eloquently in its report on why that

needed to be done. It needed to be done not only because must justice be done, but it must also be seen to be done. People have to have confidence that they are getting a fair hearing. When you have it all rolled together, where the prosecutor and adjudicator are one and the same group or one and the same people, it is impossible to say that justice is being done.

I'd just like to conclude by stating that the Ontario Securities Commission is doing, I think, somewhat of the job that they've been hired to do, but we need them to do much more. If you just look at the names this year of the people who have been fined and the amounts of money involved, you'll see that it's enormous. That would include Michael Cowpland, who has been fined \$500,000; Glen Harvey Harper, who has been prohibited from acting in the stock exchange for 15 years; Daniel Duic, who was fined \$1.9 million plus costs; Andrew Rankin, who has been found to be tipping the scales; and Jonathan Carley, who has been fined about \$90,000 for his actions. These are the kinds of things we need to stamp out, and I would tell the minister that we need to do it sooner rather than later.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To respond to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, let me say to the minister that his announcement today will be welcome, even though in comparison to other provinces it is a little too late and much too little.

The minister will know that the federal government made their announcement of financial assistance to beef producers many months ago and other provinces, namely Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta, were very quick to take up the federal announcement and come forward with complementary strategies. As a result, Ontario farmers have been disadvantaged vis-à-vis beef producers in Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta, for example. So while today's announcement will be welcomed, it is a little late in comparison to what other provinces have been doing.

I want to offer this advice to the minister: Move the money out the door quickly. Your government has already developed a reputation for making announcements, but then the money doesn't move until six, seven or eight months later. In this case, a great deal of damage will be done in six, seven or eight months.

What I think farmers also want to hear from the minister is an announcement very soon about a long-term, low-interest loan strategy, so that beef producers in particular, but rural Ontario in general, will have some financial capital to be able to dig themselves out of the debt situation they're in now.

The minister will know—he's talked to farmers, especially beef producers—that many of them have already exhausted their own equity. They have exhausted their lines of credit. They have deficit financing with their suppliers and they need a strategy of long-term, low-interest loans to begin to recover from this. We want to see that and see it soon.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK
AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES
QUESTIONS)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1437.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldeep	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Kwintar, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Flaherty, Jim	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	
Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Once again, a question for the Premier on broken promises, an issue that's going to plague him, justifiably, for the rest of his term.

Undoubtedly, Premier, the most important promises you made—and people believed you—dealt with health care. You promised a universal, publicly funded health care system that gives us all the care we need, when we need it. You never said, "I'll raise your taxes and cut your services," but that's what you've done. We're now paying more for less. Today marks the privatization of optometry services, with chiropractic care and physiotherapy soon to follow.

You feebly attempted to excuse your broken promises by saying you were overly ambitious. What's your excuse for taking away important health care services that so many Ontarians depend on?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm proud of the investments we're making in health care. In fact, we're investing some \$700 million more than the Tories had committed to in their last budget by way of hospitals. We are now working actively with our hospitals to ensure that we can continue to improve quality of care while bringing about more efficiencies.

I can tell you that we're also very proud that we've committed ourselves to—and we're well underway—ensuring that we have 2,300 more hip and knee replacements every year, as well as 9,000 more cataract procedures every single year.

We are determined to ensure that Ontarians are getting not only more value but more quality from their health care system.

Mr Runciman: Not very many Ontarians agree with that premise, and certainly there's no proof to support it to date.

In the months ahead, three health care services that many Ontarians depend on for quality of life will be delisted, privatized, by the Liberal government. Your government's decision to not only break your tax increase promise through your \$2-billion health tax but at the same time take away much-needed and beneficial services not only speaks to your integrity but also to your competence.

Premier, before taking the decision to delist or privatize optometry, chiropractic and physiotherapy services, did you conduct cost-benefit analyses, or was this just another knee-jerk, ill-thought-out initiative that your government seems to specialize in?

Hon Mr McGuinty: What the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that he is a staunch defender of the status quo. We do not support the status quo, and we are doing the difficult work that is involved in improving the quality of our health care system.

The member opposite may not want to hear this, but the fact is that when I got here 14 years ago, about one third of the budget went into health care. Today, close to one half of our program spending goes into health care. The members opposite may feel that 55% of the budget should go into health care. They may say that 60% of the budget should go into health care. Maybe they'd argue that 70% or 80% of the money should go into health care. We don't believe that would be appropriate, fitting and just when it comes to all the needs we have to meet on behalf of the people of Ontario. So we are making some difficult decisions. We're making them to ensure that we have a system of health care that delivers greater quality and is affordable over the long term.

My friends opposite are defenders of the status quo. They do not believe in doing the tough work today in order to ensure that we have a good health care system tomorrow. We will not shrink from that responsibility.

Mr Runciman: We wonder if removing services is good for health care. The Premier earlier referenced wait times, and this is another one of his health care promises. You have also used wait time reductions as a justification for your broken promise: your record tax grab.

Now we hear from none other than your own wait time expert, Dr Alan Hudson, that wait time data will take two years to compile. I quote Dr Hudson: "I can't promise we'll get the wait times down by then."

Premier, this looks like another Liberal shell game. Your own expert is raising doubts about the veracity of yet another of your promises. You've led people down the garden path once too often. You've increased taxes and removed key services, and now your own expert has put one of the primary justifications for your health tax in question. Premier, why should the good people of Ontario believe anything you have to say?

Hon Mr McGuinty: One of the realities of our tenure as a government is that for the previous eight years that government did nothing. They did nothing when it came to ensuring we had some real transparency and real accountability when it came to our health care system. So now we have to do the painstaking work to develop the infrastructure that actually measures our wait times.

In so many cases we don't have accurate, reliable, baseline data because they were afraid to make that information public. We're doing the difficult work to collect that information and make it public, and then we'll be in a position to demonstrate real and meaningful progress when it comes to reducing wait times for the people of Ontario. We're determined to get this job done, and I can assure you we will get it done.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Premier: The people of Ontario are justifiably angry and feel a

deep sense of betrayal at your carelessness with the truth. You said you weren't going to raise taxes on working families; you raised their taxes. Then you said it wasn't a tax, it was a premium. But last week you said it was a premium and not a tax. I half expected you to come back here and call it a "premi-ax" in some vain attempt to slip one by the voters once again.

Whatever you call it, you're taking up to a thousand dollars out of the pockets of working families in the province of Ontario, and now we hear you're not going to be reducing waiting lists, as you promised, for joint replacements or for cardiac services. Premier, how can you justify this punishing health tax when you're punishing working families in Ontario with even longer waiting lists?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On the contrary, this past Friday in the city of Toronto, 200 people came together, the leadership of Ontario hospitals working with the leadership of the Ontario government to build and develop an infrastructure for wait time management that under their watch, while provinces all across the country did it, they failed to, they refused to.

What have we done already? We've invested in more volumes: more volumes this year for cancer radiation, more volumes this year for hip and knee surgery, more volumes this year for cataracts; a recent announcement that will, in the course of one year, add 10% capacity to MRIs in Ontario. Already, one year in office, our government is demonstrating meaningful results, building the infrastructure they didn't build while previous Ministers of Health in that government ran for the leadership of their party instead.

Mr Hudak: Well, Premier, a whole lot of talk from you and your health minister, but we're not seeing any action on behalf of working families in Ontario.

Let me give you some of the evidence. Last Friday was the deadline for hospitals to submit their balanced budget plans. Due to your underfunding, Four Counties hospital in Newbury, between Chatham and London, may have to close all 20 beds. The hospital is also warning they'll be closing long-term-care beds in Strathroy. The Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance is closing 47 hospital beds. The Seaforth Community Hospital is looking at closing 19 of its 34 beds.

Premier, you said you were going to invest in long-term care before you made your reductions to the hospital sector. But that promise, of course, is not holding true, because you're cutting long-term-care beds and cutting hospital beds. Will you apologize to the folks at Seaforth and Strathroy and across Ontario for these cuts to the hospital system?

1450

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member wishes that we'd apologize. When we arrived in office, Newbury hospital was feeling like they had been left behind, forgotten by the previous government. One of the first questions I

responded to in this Legislature was to say that we're keeping Newbury open.

The member talks about long-term care: 3,760 new funded long-term-care beds in 2004-05 and an additional \$191 million to enhance the quality of care for those that existed. We inherited a crisis in long-term care, manufactured on your watch. We've made tremendous gains—a \$103-million investment in home care to provide an extraordinary raise: 95,000 additional clients served by home care over the next number of years.

This is the evidence of a government that has moved to address the chronic, urgent priorities of the people of Ontario: a \$2.161-billion new investment, reflective of enhanced care across a broad range of services, many of them, like mental health, ignored by that party while in office.

Mr Hudak: Mr Premier and Mr Minister, it's been a year. We've heard all kinds of bluster. We want to actually see some action and you following through on your promises. Lord knows the people of Newbury, if they said they had been ignored, didn't expect the focus of the bully health minister or the flip-flopping Premier to result in the closure of all of the beds in their hospital.

Minister, I want to talk to you about your proposed regional health authorities. Your recent bulletin talks about 14 more across the province. For folks in Fort Erie, Beamsville or Dunnville, that would mean their health care decisions being made in Hamilton instead of in Niagara. You're about to create a new, extensive Ministry of Health bureaucracy while you're making cuts to the hospital and the long-term-care sector. Can you stand in your place and say today that not one penny—not one penny—of Dalton McGuinty's health care tax will go into new bureaucracy before health care services?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Not only can I and will I confirm for the member that local health integration networks will be about a smaller bureaucracy for health in the province of Ontario, but I can tell the honourable member that he operates in his question with a brutal misunderstanding of the realities of health care delivery today. The very services that he likes to pretend in his question are decisions being made in Niagara—the reality is that those decisions are currently being made across the street in the Hepburn Block. Our initiative is to press those resources, press the decision-making and press the planning down to a community level, to create a geographic boundary as an organizing principle so that for once in the province of Ontario, all health care providers will be operating with the same set of unique patients within the same boundaries and they will be integrating their service delivery.

This is not about a bigger bureaucracy, Mr Speaker. This is, once and for all, getting on with the work that, while they were in office, they failed to do.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, six months ago in your budget, you cut the eye exams provided by

optometrists from OHIP. Optometrists, physicians and specialists all said to you that this is wrong, completely wrong-headed, and bad for people's health. You've been forced by that criticism to restore some of those eye exams, but you still don't have it right.

New Democrats believe that eye exams are crucial health services that are good for people's health and are good for the health care system. We believe everyone with an OHIP card deserves access to optometry services, not just people with credit cards. Premier, will you stop your privatization of optometry services and reverse the cuts you are continuing to try to force?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We will not embrace the status quo, as my colleague opposite is so determined to do. I'm pleased that we've been able to make some changes that are in fact going to improve the quality of and access to care.

Here are a couple of comments received, one from Gary O'Connor, area executive director for greater Toronto-central south, Canadian Diabetes Association, who said, "I am pleased that the Ontario government is enhancing eye care for people with diabetes." Beyond that, Andrew Budning, who is chair of the section of ophthalmology at the Ontario Medical Association, said, "A top priority in eye care must always be anticipating and preventing future problems. By increasing access and providing the best quality eye care by the most qualified professionals to people with sight-threatening medical conditions, the government is doing just that."

Mr Hampton: This is the oldest shell game. The McGuinty government cuts optometry services in the spring, and after facing a barrage of criticism they restore some of the services, and then you say, "Hurray; we've improved service." What a shell game. The reality is that millions of adults in Ontario will now end up paying for optometry exams through a credit card and not through OHIP. Premier, cutting health services is never going to improve Ontario's health system.

Here's the reality: Since you've become Premier, you've cut optometry, you've cut chiropractic, you've cut physiotherapy, you're now trying to cut from the Ontario drug benefit plan, and you've added a new health tax.

Premier, will you do the right thing? You've recognized, through the criticism, that you're wrong. Will you restore optometry services to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just so the record is stated on this, it was the NDP that cut the Ontario drug benefit plan, not this government. It was the NDP, just so we're clear on that. I know the member opposite may have forgotten that conveniently, but it's true.

We are pleased that we can now ensure that those with eye diseases like glaucoma have expanded access. I want to repeat for members opposite so they understand: We are expanding access for those with eye diseases like glaucoma. Eye exams will now be covered annually instead of once every two years. By the way, this puts us in line with all the other provinces in terms of what they are doing.

Any dollars saved in connection with this will be invested into more cataracts, more hips and knees, more cancer care, more cardiac care. Those are the kinds of tough decisions that we have made and that we will continue to make as we govern.

Mr Hampton: Once again the Premier repeats the shell game. He sets out in his budget in the spring to cut optometry services. He faces a barrage of criticism telling him that it is wrong-headed and bad for health care. Now he restores some of the service and he wants to pretend that he's the great defender of OHIP. The reality is, you are cutting health care services. Many people will not be able to afford to pay for optometry eye exams. That will hurt their health; it will hurt health care outcomes.

Are you prepared to admit that you're wrong? Are you prepared to admit that once again you're breaking a promise you made before the election? Will you do the right thing: restore optometry services so that adults across Ontario will have access to this important health care service?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The leader of the NDP doesn't want to recognize that we have gone to great lengths to ensure that we are protecting the poor, we are protecting the elderly, we are protecting the young, and we are improving the quality of care for the sick. We're proud of that change.

Just to remind the NDP of their legacy when it comes to health care cuts: They cut hospitals by \$277 million from 1993 to 1995. They cut funding for OHIP in 1995 by \$218 million. They cut funding for the Ontario drug benefit plan by \$29.3 million in 1994. They cut funding for mental health in 1994 by \$42.4 million. They cut funding for community and public health by \$163.7 million in their last budget in 1995. That is the legacy of the so-called staunch defenders of health care in Ontario.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I would just say to the Premier, you might want to see how much of that cut was forced on to provinces by someone named Paul Martin, the Liberal finance minister.

Premier, last week we learned that you're pocketing federal money that should be used to purchase new MRIs and CT scans—something you weren't supposed to do; something you said before the election that you wouldn't do.

Here's what we know: You've received \$380 million from the federal government in a designated fund to purchase MRIs and CT scans. Nine out of 10 radiologists say that you've made little or no progress in reducing wait times for these diagnostic procedures. In Ottawa, your hometown, there's a 35-week wait for MRIs, and 11,000 people can't even get on the waiting list.

Premier, will you spend the federal money that was designated for the purchase of MRIs and CT scans for the purchase of MRIs and CT scans?

1500

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I see that the honourable member hasn't taken any opportunity to talk to his research people over the course of the lengthy time between Thursday and now, so I'll have to do the work for him.

I said categorically in this House on Thursday that there was no fact to the basis of the allegation that the honourable member is making. The fact of the matter is that Anne McLellan, the then federal Health Minister, participated with me in the first phase of announcements for the 2003-04 diagnostic medical equipment fund. Where did we do that? We did that at Princess Margaret Hospital, where we were making a \$29.5-million investment to replace and upgrade radiation therapy equipment that will improve—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: You should be sorry. Do you know why? Because the fact of the matter is that this is improved access to treatment for cancer patients.

Here's what Anne McLellan said on that day: "We are pleased that the Ontario government is moving so quickly"—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Maybe you could do that in the supplementary. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: Once again, we see that the Premier doesn't want to answer the question and the minister thinks that lecturing Ontario's citizens is an answer.

Let me provide some more factual information. The reality is that wait times for MRIs and CT scans in this province, not just in Ottawa but elsewhere in this province, are growing. The McGuinty government's pattern of cutting health care services and then adding on a new health care tax isn't doing anything to address it.

This is what Dr Alan Hudson had to say on the weekend: "I can't promise we'll get the waiting times down." But here we have designated federal money. Front-line radiologists have given your government a plan. They say that you can cut waiting times by using the federal money that you get to buy 35 new CT scans and 65 new MRIs. That will help you get the wait times down. When are you going to start using the designated federal money for MRIs and CT scans to, in fact, buy those MRIs and CT scans?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Quoting specifically from the guidelines provided by the federal government to the provinces, the scope of diagnostic and medical equipment includes "diagnostic imaging equipment ... other diagnostic and therapeutic equipment ... medical/surgical equipment" and "patient comfort/safety equipment."

A further quote from the federal Minister of Health at the time that we were allocating resources, which included \$33.5 million in capital funding for diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical equipment in hospitals, which improves patient care and working conditions for Ontario health care workers: Anne McLellan said, "We are pleased that the Ontario government is moving so quickly to allocate this funding. This is the first instalment of a three-year federal commitment to modernize and replace

... equipment, improve patient access, safety, comfort and convenience and improve working conditions for health care workers"—which is why we also invested \$14 million in bed lifts to save the ailing backs of Ontario nurses.

Mr Hampton: The minister's answer just confirms the point: MRI waiting lists in the province are growing; CT scan waiting lists in the province are growing. And what does the minister say? He says that the designated federal money has been spent on something else.

Minister, all of the volume and all of the lecturing isn't going to cover up the unfortunate reality for Ontario patients. In Ottawa, they're waiting 35 weeks, and 11,000 patients can't even get on the waiting list because they've closed it. It means that family, friends, neighbours are all worried about what's going to happen to these patients. These patients are worried most of all.

I'm simply saying to you, instead of continuing to spend this designated federal money elsewhere, will you do the right thing? Will you do what you promised to do before the election: spend this designated federal money on the MRIs, on the CT scans, where it's supposed to go, so we can begin to deal with the waiting lists?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The first point I'll make is that we made an investment in MRIs and CT scan access, which is increasing by 10% access for Ontarians to MRIs. The honourable member says, "Do the right thing." Are we to understand, then, from the leader of the third party that investing \$14 million in patient safety lifts to assist the backs of nurses in this province is not the right thing to do?

I quote: "'This investment in nurses' health and safety is outstanding news,' said Mary Ferguson-Paré, chief nursing officer of the Toronto General Hospital. 'Nursing is physically demanding and many nurses suffer disability due to lifting patients. This investment will lower the risk of on-the-job injury and raise the level of safety in our hospitals.'"

This is an example of the way that we're appropriately spending money to save the backs of nurses and to improve the quality of patient care in our province.

STEVEN TRUSCOTT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, the Steven Truscott case has now been referred to the Ontario Court of Appeal by federal Justice Minister Irwin Cotler. Last Thursday, Minister Cotler said that, from his perspective, there appeared to have been, and I'm quoting him, "a miscarriage of justice" in relation to the original conviction of Mr Truscott. Mr Cotler also said that he believed it was appropriate that the Ontario Court of Appeal look into the case.

Instead of exercising his option to order a new trial, the minister has now, effectively, sentenced Mr Truscott to wait what some experts are estimating will be several years before the Court of Appeal may hear the case. As we know, Mr Truscott has already been waiting some-

thing like 45 years. Minister, without prejudging the outcome of the case, will you do what you can to expedite the court of appeal process so that Mr Truscott can finally have his day in court?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): To answer the question directly, yes, though it is in the hands of the court, and I don't want to say anything that would in any way prejudice the court's deliberations. Will we assist the court and try and deal with this in a fashion that sees justice done, and done as quickly as possible? Yes, we will. We will work with the court in doing that.

It is now in the hands of the Chief Justice, who will make a determination as to panel. There will be, no doubt, a meeting between counsel, then decisions will be made as the applicants provide their evidence and submissions, and we will consider them in due course. So we want to ensure that there is due process, but, to answer your question, of course we will try and ensure that this is dealt with, as we always do, as expeditiously as possible, keeping in mind that the speed of this is going to be determined by the Chief Justice himself.

Mr Runciman: No one was suggesting that we pre-judge the outcome. What we're suggesting is to be fair to Mr Truscott, given the ordeal that he and his family and friends have been through for so many years, that he take whatever action is possible in his office. This is not a partisan issue, and we're certainly not trying to make it a partisan issue. We'll take the minister at his word that he will do whatever he can in his capacity as the Attorney General for the province of Ontario to ensure that this is dealt with in as timely a way as possible.

Hon Mr Bryant: This is now before the courts. It is not before this Legislature. It is not going to be determined by the court of public opinion but, rather, by a court of law.

One thing Minister Cotler said was that for anybody who wishes to find exoneration, it is found by the court. In this case, a conviction has been entered. Minister Cotler did not order a new trial, which means there are no outstanding charges to be laid or not. There's no prosecution to be pursued or not. There is a conviction that has been entered. He could have chosen a new trial; he didn't. He could have chosen to dismiss the application; he didn't. Instead, what he did was send this matter to the Court of Appeal.

This latest chapter in the Truscott matter will finally be written by the Court of Appeal, and we will finally get a determination from that court as to that conviction. I share the view and the hope that it's going to be dealt with by the court in a timely fashion, and I have no doubt that it will be.

1510

HOME CARE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Minister, Bill Moline lives in St Catharines and, for over a decade, he's

had the Victorian Order of Nurses attending at his home because he has wounds on both his feet that require inspection, dressing and rebandaging. Since you shut the door on the Victorian Order of Nurses in Niagara, the new operators, CarePartners, have missed four of six visits to Mr Moline. His doctor tells him that his feet are not being properly dressed and bandaged. Mr Moline, you see, is blind—he can't see his feet—and he has neuropathy, so he can't feel them to know when there's an infection.

Where previously the Victorian Order of Nurses were delivering materials that he needed for his treatment, he's now been told that, if he's going to get these materials, he can either pay the delivery fee of \$10 to \$15 or pick them up himself, on his own. That's absurd; he's blind. When Mr Moline has to undergo amputations because of these infections, do you want to be advised?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Obviously, I'm not in a position to comment on a specific case, but the case the member brings to the attention of the House is one that I take seriously. I'm going to make sure there's an appropriate investigation by the ministry. More to the point, the community care access centre in Niagara certainly has the powers to deal in a contractual way with the service provider.

The situation that the member raises is one that is obviously of concern to all of us, and I'll endeavour to work with the honourable member to seek a resolution that's satisfactory for the patient at hand.

Mr Kormos: Minister, you don't seem to take these concerns seriously enough to protect the role of hard-working, professional, non-profit Victorian Order of Nurses personnel, like the people sitting up here in this gallery, who are providing competent home care service.

Let me tell you about 17-year-old Santino Campisano. He had minor surgery on his foot and relied upon attendants to come to his home to dress the wound. The nurses under your new competitive bidding system are routinely late and, in fact, one recent visit resulted in him being attended by an attendant who didn't glove herself before dressing his wound. He's now suffered a reinfection and has to go back to the hospital for more surgery because of that infection.

Minister, are you going to take this seriously enough to very specifically address those contracts that flowed from your support of the policy of competitive bidding, that ousted the Victorian Order of Nurses from their long-time historical role in communities like Niagara and across this province in providing competent home care service? Or are you going to tell Mr Campisano that he's on his own?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The evidence would be very clear to that gentleman that he's not on his own. We take any matter that the member brings forward concerning a quality-of-patient-care issue very seriously. We have invested \$103 million this year in community care access centres. I think this stands as evidence of our commitment to home care.

But we've gone further. I've been concerned, as well, with some of the patterns of settlement and the implication that has had on the relationship between caregivers and patients. That's why we're in the midst of a review that we're working to complete on an expedited basis.

I do take the matter that the member raises very seriously. We'll look at those individual circumstances and, more to the point, we're taking a review right at the moment to see what we can do to enhance the quality of connection that occurs in a very special way between caregivers and patients in the province of Ontario.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I was recently reading the most recent commentary put out by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Geri Kamenz writes about the BSE crisis that cattle farmers are facing and claims there is currently money approved and waiting for delivery.

He also states, "We're at a point where we need to ask that the minister to direct his staff to develop and deliver the federal/provincial funding immediately." Mr Kamenz and the OFA are implying that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food is stalling the funds. Minister, is this true, and can you explain what is happening with the BSE funding to farmers in my riding and across Ontario?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Perhaps there are individuals out there who need to pick up the phone and get the information directly from the cattlemen's mouths.

This government is very committed to supporting the agriculture industry, and in particular, matching the dollars that the federal government has put on the table. With the support of the Premier and other colleagues within the caucus, we've been able to come forward with an additional \$30 million in assistance, to bring support in excess of \$125 million.

I think it's important that this program was developed in conjunction with the cattlemen's association. I quote a letter from their president, Ron Wooddisse: "I wanted to take the time to write to you personally to express my gratitude for the support which you and your government have shown to the beef producers of this province ... you and your staff have been working tirelessly to develop an appropriate Ontario response."

Mr Crozier: Thanks for that explanation. I am pleased to see that our government is working co-operatively with the cattlemen's association.

Minister, on Monday in this Legislature, the member for Oxford made a number of accusations about our government's BSE assistance. The member for Oxford went on about Alberta having their program up and running and how our application process has yet to be put in place.

The member for Oxford implied that cattle farmers in this province are not important to our government. Can you explain to this House and to the member for Oxford how our government has worked with the cattle sector to come up with long-term solutions for the future?

Hon Mr Peters: Perhaps the member from Oxford should pick up the phone and get it straight from the cattlemen's mouths as well.

I want to continue with the letter from Mr Wooddisse: "Some people were obviously unhappy with the speed of the Ontario response. However, they should be aware that the attitude displayed by your staff was one of wanting to make sure that you delivered the support and programs which OCA wanted for its producers. The program details were reviewed extensively to ensure that they would meet the requirements of Ontario producers. Even the final timing for participation was discussed, and we decided collectively that given the fact that it is a two-year program, we could let Alberta participate in the first few auctions and see how they went, in case we wanted to make changes to better fit the Ontario producer. In fact, from watching the results of the first auction, we were able to request changes to the program to allow greater participation in Ontario."

Consultation is what it's about, consultation is what we did and we will be there to support our farmers.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your party was elected on a promise to reduce waiting times for medical procedures. I fail to see how waiting times of a year to 18 months for neurological testing is keeping that promise.

Kristin Huestis-Wong suffers from a type of epilepsy. The probable cause is a slow-growing tumour in the right frontal lobe of her brain. Her seizures can strike without warning. She has been waiting for months for the procedure to confirm the diagnosis. There are only two beds allocated for this procedure in the city of Toronto.

Will you commit today to the people of Ontario to devote some of that federal funding to much-needed neurological testing in the province of Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member raises an issue that obviously is highly specialized, as evidenced by the fact that it's being provided in what I assume is one of our tertiary-care hospitals in the city of Toronto.

I have to take the situation under advisement and will endeavour to get back to the honourable member to determine the situation related to the very important procedure he raises.

Mr Yakubuski: I thank the minister for his commitment to look into it. And we will be expecting an answer, because in this House we're not used to getting answers.

Minister, we cannot accept that wait times of a year to 18 months for this kind of testing are acceptable. These seizures can strike at any time: waiting for a bus, waiting for a subway. This is a serious problem. We cannot wait for dithering, for politicizing, for skating; the time for action is now. Put your shoulder to the harness, Minister. Start to lead. We need an answer on neurological testing. We would like to have a commitment today for the people of Ontario.

1520

Hon Mr Smitherman: I can assure the honourable member that our shoulder is to the harness, that we're working very, very aggressively on a strategy to transform the health care system in the province of Ontario.

I remind the honourable member that in this year's budget we have \$700 million more in our hospital line than what your party, while in government, proposed for this fiscal year. I think that does stand out as a very keen example of the extent to which we're committed to funding Ontario's hospitals properly for the purposes of services such as the one the honourable member raises. But I have undertaken to get back to the honourable member, and I will.

GREENBELT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week you announced your greenbelt legislation, and, as usual with your government, it was loaded with promises and the devil was in the detail. One of the details that is missing is the implementation of the agricultural component. Farmers want to know what compensation they will receive for loss of farm equity.

In fact, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture says, "Farmers have already lost equity through the zoning freeze. The loss of equity takes away the incentive to further invest in the farm operation. The government must examine mechanisms for compensation for the loss of farmer viability and equity."

Premier, this is a very important detail. What will your government do to compensate farmers for the loss of farm viability and farm equity?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me say, first of all, how proud we are of our new Golden Horseshoe greenbelt and the fact that we are looking far beyond the next election into the next generation, and generations beyond that, to ensure that they will be able to enjoy green space in perpetuity. We think it's an absolutely important thing to do to enhance the quality of life.

One of the things I hear from farmers, one of those things they have deplored, is the continuing loss of arable farmland in the province of Ontario. What we're doing by means of this greenbelt, in part, is saying no to that loss, to that gobbling up by means of sprawl, of our farmland. We are standing up for farming. We are standing up for farmland. We're standing up for the people of Ontario and ensuring that we can grow our own food in our own province, not too far from our cities. That's what we're saying, and we're proud to do that.

Mr Hampton: The question was a very specific question about detail. One of the realities of your government, Premier, is that you made all kinds of promises before the election and then you default on the promises after the election.

I have to admit that this one may take people 10 years to see whether or not you implement it. But this is a

specific question. For a lot of farmers their farm equity is important because they need to take that equity to the bank. They use it for the purposes of purchasing equipment, purchasing seed or purchasing other aspects they need for their farm operation. If suddenly their farm equity drops considerably, they're out of business. So this is a very important detail if the greenbelt legislation is going to work.

What plans does your government have to compensate those farmers for an incredible loss of equity on their farmland and their farm capital?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We do not plan to compensate farmers. Our plan is to ensure that farming remains a viable undertaking in the province of Ontario by preserving farmland.

The leader of the NDP has apparently now changed his stripes. He would prefer that we pave over farmland in Ontario. We say no to that. We say yes to preserving farmland in perpetuity for today's farmers and farmers yet to come.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. With the aging population in this province and across the country, I know that we will all face some challenges in meeting the needs of the population's changing demographic. I know that all three levels of government will be working hard to make the necessary changes, but I am concerned that with all these changes there will be some confusion in terms of service delivery and responsibilities. Can you reassure me that our seniors will have access to both the services and the information they need?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for his very insightful question. As he well knows, seniors are the largest and fastest-growing group of individuals in this province right now. As a matter of fact, the senior population will double over the next 10 years.

Ontario is showing leadership in creating opportunities to integrate the services that are delivered at the federal level, in collaboration with local municipalities, seniors' organizations and service providers. The collaborative seniors' portal provides seniors, their families and service providers with easy access to information and services from all three levels of government. As a matter of fact, it was a year ago yesterday that the seniors' portal was launched in Brockville, which soon will be expanded to three other communities in Ontario.

Our federal and municipal partners are ready, willing and able to work together to serve seniors better. We are working to meet the challenges and opportunities that Ontario's increasing senior population needs.

Mr Ramal: It's good to know that our government is proactively planning for these changes. I am confident we will be well-prepared for when the baby boom generation fully hits retirement age. In the meantime, though,

the seniors of today also need our protection. In the past, I have heard and read about horrendous cases of elder abuse, and I feel that we as a government have the responsibility to protect this vulnerable segment of our population. Can you tell me how our government is acting to make these cases of abuse a thing of the past?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: The member from London-Fanshawe is quite right: Ontario seniors deserve to live in safety and with dignity as independently as possible and with the supports they need. We are committed to building safer communities, and that certainly includes seniors. As a matter of fact, together with the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, we are implementing the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse.

Our strategy, at a cost of \$4.3 million, is the first of its kind in Canada and is addressing three priority areas: coordination of local community services, training for front-line staff serving seniors and public education to raise awareness of this growing problem. As part of the strategy, elder abuse consultants are working with these networks across the province to support their efforts in the justice, health and social service sectors to better respond to the needs of abused seniors.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I hope he answers today. I note that our caucus and our leader, John Tory, support your government's decision to provide sustainable funding for public transit through the gas tax. However, you are responsible for defending northern interests at the cabinet table. Most northern communities do not have public transit. Can you tell us why you have allowed the majority of communities in the north to be denied a portion of the gas tax or a similar funding program?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm pleased to answer the question. Clearly, northern municipalities that receive their fair share of the gas tax are extremely excited about the potential they have with the use of that money. Those municipalities that don't have public transit certainly have access to COMRIF. They too are extremely excited, because finally we have a government in place that recognizes the potential of both large urban and small rural municipalities.

Mr Miller: I'm asking you why, as the minister responsible for the north, you have not ensured a similar funding package for the majority of communities in the north. What about New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Marathon, Wawa, Red Lake, Pickle Lake, Iroquois Falls, Port Severn, Rainy River, Geraldton and Nipigon? In my riding, one of the 26 municipalities will benefit from a share of the gas tax. Residents of these communities rely on the roads and bridges to get to and from work. Maintaining these bridges and roads is a major burden on municipal budgets and public transit is not currently a possibility.

Minister, northern communities also need your support. Will you ask your colleagues to provide a parallel program that will ensure sustainable funding for northern municipalities where public transit is not feasible?

1530

Hon Mr Bartolucci: I am proud to stand and say, finally, all the municipalities in northern Ontario have a government that cares about them and is giving them the tools necessary to achieve the wealth and potential that they never ever had with the previous government.

Listen, the previous eight years of government by the members opposite caused unbelievable unemployment in northern Ontario. We are providing opportunities through our northern prosperity plan—by the way, the plan that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka said wasn't working. Yet so far, we have 1,000 direct jobs because of the northern Ontario heritage fund. We are putting grow bonds in place to ensure that small- and medium-sized businesses grow. We're ensuring, though our GO North program, that new anchor businesses come to northern Ontario. We believe in—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier, but first I'd like to know what part of northern Ontario the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has been visiting, because I'll tell you, it's not the communities we come from.

My question, Premier, is simply this: You would know that the Kirkland Lake hospital is facing a budget shortfall of \$1.4 million this year. Kirkland Lake hospital board chairman Eugene Ivanov says they're in a critical situation. In fact, he says they will have to make dramatic program service cuts that will not be in the public interest.

Let me remind you of your election promise number 126 on health care. You promised to deliver stability to our hospitals by providing adequate multi-year funding. My question to you is, can you please tell the people of Kirkland Lake and Kirkland Lake hospital board chair Eugene Ivanov how it's in the public interest for you to break your promise and underfund their hospital?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the member understands that what he's portraying there is a little less than accurate. What we're doing with the hospital in Kirkland Lake, and hospitals throughout the province of Ontario, is working with them to ensure that we can deliver still better quality care in a way that is more efficient. He also knows that the hospitals have two years within which to balance their budgets. He also knows—at least he should know—that over 50 hospitals already have presented plans where they balance their budgets in a way that does not compromise the quality of services they deliver to their communities.

We've got a seven-step plan. We're prepared to work with the hospital in Kirkland Lake, as we are with

hospitals around the province, to ensure that we get this right and, in particular, to ensure that we do find more efficiencies so we can devote more of our precious health care dollars to improving the quality of services for Ontarians.

Mr Bisson: The Premier should know that 80% of northern hospitals are facing deficits. Let me be clear: Hospital deficits are not a result of hospitals just saying, "Let the budget rip." Rather, they're a direct result of cost increases that are associated with such things as higher drug costs, an increased number of patients accessing hospital services, an aging population, and the list goes on.

Your decision not to fund year-end deficits is forcing hospitals across the north to cut essential services. In the case of Kirkland Lake, it's such a desperate situation that they're withdrawing their support for physician recruitment as of April 1, 2005. Imagine how that'll negatively affect the Kirkland Lake area when it comes to health care.

Minister, I ask you again, why are you breaking your promise to northern Ontario by not providing adequate funding to hospital services in northern Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the minister has more details on this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, I would acknowledge that we recognize there's a particular challenge with small and rural hospitals and we're working very hard with membership of the Ontario Hospital Association on that right now. I know that the situation in Kirkland Lake is a particularly challenging one, not just around the circumstances at the hospital but around issues of physician recruitment.

I had an opportunity a few months ago to meet with the mayor. This past Friday, my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, I believe with the participation of the Minister of Northern Development, announced two new nurse practitioners who are going into the Kirkland Lake community. We have more work to do there, for sure.

What I would say to the honourable member is that the Premier, in his answer, I think did provide the outline for the way this process is designed to work. The predictions of those things that might occur are not, I think, in many cases, likely to be the end situation, but the situation that the member seems to campaign in favour of, allowing hospitals to run up a deficit and have that funding at the end of the year, is not one that is sustainable for our health care system. That's why we're working with Ontario hospitals over a period of 18 months to get all of them in balance. That's the challenge we're working through on a case-by-case basis.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Labour. The issue of asbestos in construction—and I can say so as an engineer—has been a long-standing issue and of concern to the people of Ontario. It was banned quite some years ago

and is no longer permitted in new construction, but for older buildings that are being renovated or modified or torn down, it is a very real concern to the workers. Can you tell me what our government is doing to protect the workers on these sites?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to thank the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for the question and for the very serious issue that he's raised.

Asbestos, as he rightly points out, is not used in new construction now but it is of course present in older buildings, which may be torn down or renovated. So it presents a problem, a very serious medical hazard to the workers, to the supervisors and to third-party occupants who may be in the same building or nearby.

For that reason, the ministry has involved themselves in an extensive look at the existing regulations to determine how they can be improved. We've come up with a proposal, but to make sure it's going to actually put forward the additional protection necessary, it's being circulated now for consultation among the stakeholders—the labour groups, those working in this area, the business groups—to make sure that it's actually going to achieve the type of protection necessary.

One last thing: We're also involving, with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, additional training requirements to make sure people know how to keep themselves protected from this very hazardous substance.

Mr Parsons: Thank you, Minister. The other concern I have is the entire matter of hazardous materials present in workplaces. We read some very unfortunate things in the media of young people who have been injured on jobs in the year past, or even experienced workers or firefighters entering a building where hazardous materials are present. Could you tell me what our government is doing to protect everyone in Ontario from hazardous materials within a workplace?

Hon Mr Bentley: This is the broader issue. There are hundreds of potentially hazardous substances, and they all have varying, different degrees of risk. For years, there has been something known as occupational exposure limits, which is the amount of substance a worker, or anyone, can be exposed to for a certain period of time without endangering their health. The problem we had historically is that there hasn't been a regular means of updating these exposure limits.

So several months ago, at the IAPA conference, I announced a new process, a process whereby these occupational exposure limits would be updated every year, not every five or 10 years, so that the workers, business owners, everybody would be protected by the most current medical and scientific evidence. That will ensure that the people of this province have the best protection possible and available that science will allow.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. You would know that your govern-

ment has long talked—and there's been little action—about the use of smart meter technology to reform the whole electricity consumption issue. You've talked about it, and we're all waiting for the shoe to drop here.

I was reading an article this morning that said smart meters don't cut usage. This is written by an industry spokesperson, Paul Kahnert: "Smart meters do not get people to use less power." In fact, they made a very important observation here, Minister, that you might be aware of, and I'm suspicious here because of what the issue is: "Smart meters will be a great way for the government to scapegoat the public."

Minister, your response to this is going to be, "We give you the smart meter; you're supposed to conserve electricity," and if they don't, you're going to blame the consumers. Will you promise the House today that you're not going to force consumers to pay for the smart meters in their home, when they've been forced on them by you?

1540

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We are helping consumers by giving them the tools they need to manage their consumption. By helping them to manage their consumption, they can help to manage their bills.

The Ontario Energy Board is currently consulting with LDCs and stakeholders with respect to how to roll out smart meters in the most cost-effective way. The \$600 meters that the Toronto Star article refers to would only be used with large commercial customers. We want to look at all options that are available for us to use smart meters and time-of-use rates. We've asked the OEB to report back with recommendations in February. The OEB report will contain advice on rollout strategies for smart meters.

We do believe in conservation. We believe that conservation—smart meters coupled with time-of-use rates—will assist consumers in managing their electricity costs and will help them, in the long term, to save money on their hydro bills. It's the policy of this government to help consumers manage their electricity costs.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that answer. The only thing is that your own people in the Ministry of Energy have clearly admitted that the cost of these new smart meters, so called, is over \$2 billion. Now, the word out on the street, my constituents included, is that you're going to force this tax—that's what it is. You're going to force them to buy these smart meters. That's another \$600 to \$800 whack on each household in this province.

Minister, let's keep this simple. Whether or not the smart meters work really isn't the question. It's who's going to pay. One way or another, this is another Liberal solution by raising their tax. The cost of electricity is going to be forced on each household, whether the experts I've just cited here today say they don't work. Minister, tell the House today that you're not going to charge every electricity user more for the price of electricity.

Hon Mr Duncan: I disagree wholeheartedly with those who say they don't work. Let's look at the facts: In

Italy, China, Australia, California, they work. The member talks about the cost, but the member conveniently forgets that in jurisdictions where they've been implemented, they've paid for themselves with the savings associated. The member opposite forgets that the pay-back period to consumers is under two years in some jurisdictions. We reject what you stand for in electricity. The member also forgets the \$1.8 billion that his government foisted on the people of Ontario by their artificial price caps. The member forgets the contracts for Mike Harris, Paul Rhodes, Deb Hutton and many others through Hydro One. We won't let you forget, and we are going to do smart meters. We're going to help consumers manage their bills and undo the mess you left for this province.

VISITOR

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I want to take this opportunity to welcome Margaret Klanjscek, mother of Ashley Casey, who is the page from Hamilton East. Thank you for coming in to see your daughter. She's been doing a wonderful job in the Legislature as a page.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon Dwight Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to correct the record of something I said in the House last week in response to a question from the member for Oak Ridges, Mr Klees, regarding the Hydro One transmission reinforcement project in York region. I responded as part of my answer and indicated that Hydro One's environmental studies report on this proposal was posted on October 21 for a 30-day public review period. In fact, it is a 60-day public review period. Hydro One asked for and has received an extension on that. I wish to correct the record, and I'd like to thank the member, Mr Klees, for bringing that to my attention.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I presume that brings us to the end of question period.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions.

A former Speaker used to say that when the Speaker is standing, everyone else should be sitting.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Georgian Chiropractic Centre.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I've also signed this.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Whereas continuous, quality home care services are vital to Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas there are no province-wide accountability standards for home care; and

"Whereas competitive bidding and managed competition for home care support services have resulted in more for-profit agencies providing taxpayer-funded health services; and

"Whereas the managed competition model is flawed and has resulted in enormous home care provider turnovers and has left home care clients with as little as 10 minutes of care per visit; and

"Whereas the community care access centres are the real employers of home care workers and not the contracted service provider agency;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to keep home care services under public control and administration and create a permanent, professional workforce, employed directly by community care access centres."

There are about 1,500 signatures. I've affixed my signature to this as well.

PIT BULLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition in regard to the banning of pit bulls. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas pit bulls are dangerous dogs, responsible for vicious attacks on humans out of all proportion to their numbers; and jurisdictions where bans on pit bulls have been introduced have seen dramatic reductions in pit bull

attacks on humans; and community leaders and law enforcement officials all across the province have supported a ban on pit bull ownership;"—

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: I wish the member would pay attention to this, because he is next in line.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning ownership of pit bulls in the province of Ontario."

Yes, Mr Speaker, I will affix my signature to this petition.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign that and give it to Geneva.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other" health-related "costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I turn these petitions over to Anthony Praill, a very good page from Chatham-Kent.

1550

PUBLIC TRANSIT TAX CREDIT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas public transit is an important public good for Ontario which must be promoted;

"Whereas increased ridership of the public transit system will result in benefits such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the ease of traffic congestion and gridlock;

"Whereas it is important to provide incentives to commuters to choose public transit as an alternative,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that eligible residents for the taxation year living within the province of Ontario be able to claim on their income tax an expense credit of 50% for all public transit expenses incurred throughout the taxation year," and that we support MPP John O'Toole and his recent legislation, Bill 137.

I'm pleased to sign this in support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of 820 constituents in Kingston and the Islands.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

CARDIAC CARE

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents of the Lincoln area in Niagara, entitled "Niagara's Heart Condition Petition," which I will summarize in the interests of time.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day death rate in Ontario for heart failure [and] the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure...", among other concerns; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara. Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient but relies on funding through donations and special events;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Niagara, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

"That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other communities, and made comprehensive and accessible."

I sign my signature in support.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have more petitions regarding home care. This reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas continuous quality home care services are vital to Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas there are no province-wide accountability standards for home care; and

"Whereas competitive bidding and managed competition for home care support services have resulted in more for-profit agencies providing taxpayer-funded health services; and

"Whereas the managed competition model is flawed and has resulted in enormous home care provider turnovers and has left home care clients with as little as 10 minutes of care per visit; and

"Whereas the community care access centres are the real employers of home care workers and not the contracted service provider agency,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to keep home care services under public control and administration, and create a permanent professional workforce employed directly by the community care access centres."

This is signed by hundreds of people from Welland and the Niagara area, and I've affixed my signature to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are no established province-wide standards to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school communities; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition, as it is my bill.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I've now got 1,400 signatures from people wanting to stop Toronto garbage from being shipped to Haldimand county. It's titled, "Halt Edwards Landfill Excavation."

"Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act, as of June 17, 2004, amends the Environmental Protection Act to prohibit waste in a lake; and

"Whereas in the act, 'lake' results from human activities, and directly influences or is directly influenced by groundwater; and

"Whereas Edwards landfill is to be 15 acres excavated 29 feet in a wetland/slough forest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Halt the Edwards landfill site excavation."

I support these 1,400 people and sign my name.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of

grants for Ontario's students. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

We had a press conference on the homestead at 4 o'clock last Friday. We just had a phone call from the federal member's office threatening us with trespassing to the Ontario Historical Society for having that press conference.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Wilson: Shame on them. I think it's a breach of parliamentary privilege, but I'll bring that up tomorrow.

I've signed this petition, and I agree with it.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition concerning diabetes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies, as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor, be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East has the floor.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): As everyone knows, Bill 73 is An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads. What it does, in effect, is provide for a number of different requirements both in the personal automobile and on public transportation, particularly around school buses. It will make new pieces of safety paraphernalia required on both school buses and in personal automobiles.

For example, in a personal automobile, one of the new parts that this legislation brings forward is something called a booster seat. This piece looks to try to fill the gap between what's currently required for children to use as safety seats, particularly very, very young children, and the children who are a little bit too big for safety seats but who still have significant injuries in automobile accidents. So what this means is that preschool to primary-grade children weighing between 18 kilograms and 36 kilograms, or between 40 and 80 pounds, with a standing height of less than four feet 10 inches, or 145 centimetres, to a maximum age of eight years, will be required to be in forward-facing booster seats. This means it'll be a new requirement, so a new industry of child seats will be produced, and people will be required to retrofit their cars or provide these seats in their cars for children. If that's not done, if people are transporting children who meet those new standards in terms of weight and height in cars without these seats, they will be subject to fines, demerit points and other kinds of sanctions.

I think everybody would agree that children are the most important group of people to be protected in automobiles because, quite frankly, their size alone means that in severe accidents they are often victims of very serious injuries. Simply by virtue of their size and weight, they are flung around automobiles in accident scenarios. So I think the idea that we would find extra ways or be more diligent in finding ways to protect children in automobile accidents is a very positive thing.

Like a lot of legislation, the issue becomes the way that these kinds of new regulations are enforced. I've been listening very intently to some of the debate that has gone on in the previous speeches about this bill. Particularly, there's some concern about flexibility when, for example, there's a family emergency and perhaps a child has to be transported by a grandparent or something of that nature, when there's really no opportunity for a car seat or booster seat to be jockeyed between one car and another.

Overall, I think this particular piece about the booster seats is a welcome addition. I get a little bit concerned about whether or not this is going to stymie the responsibility for child care sharing or for reliance on, for example, grandparents or other extended family members only in the case of extreme emergency. I think everyone would agree that, in general terms and in an overall view of this kind of scenario, we would want to see kids put into booster seats if it's going to mean their safety is enhanced in the case of an automobile accident taking place.

The other piece of this legislation deals with school buses in particular. The bill requires that all new school buses will have to include safety crossing arms to prevent children from walking into a bus driver's blind spot at the front of the bus.

In the community that I come from, the area of Hamilton East—in fact, right near the school where my page hails from, St. Patrick's school over on East Avenue—was where my son was picked up for the

longest time to attend his French immersion school, some way away at the other end of the city. One of the things that bus was equipped with was this very arm that's described in the bill.

My son had occasion several times to have to cross the street when the bus had stopped and was letting off children. That arm actually did provide quite a significant buffer, because if kids are too close to the front of the bus, the driver can't see them, because the bus sits up high and children are small. What the arm does is force the children to walk a significant distance out in front of the bus so that when they cross, they're visible to the driver.

It's a frightening thing—when I've taken my son or I've gone to pick him up after the bus has dropped him off, there have been occasions I've witnessed myself where drivers have not stopped at the flashing lights of the bus. So there are two things that I think are important here. One is that the arm itself is in fact an excellent safety enhancer, but also, this legislation I believe speaks to the issue of increased fines if drivers are not heeding the stopped school bus with overhead flashing lights.

It's a darned scary thing as a parent to be waiting for your child to cross the street and watch in horror as a car decides not to wait, decides they're in too much of a hurry and they're just going to go around a bus that's got its lights flashing. I'm pretty sure that in a driver's test in Ontario you have to be quite clear about what those flashing lights mean. I'm pretty sure that you can't get your driver's licence if you're failing that part of the test.

It's really frightening to see that people in communities are in such a hurry to get wherever they're wanting to get that they are prepared to put the lives and the safety of our children at risk. If increased fines actually mean that the deterrent factor is increased for people, then that's a positive thing.

However, I have to say that it's extremely important that the message get out to Ontario drivers that these kinds of initiatives are being undertaken. Really, it goes for naught if nobody's aware that this legislation is changing, that the deterrent factors are being increased, and therefore the deterrent doesn't take place. If people don't know about it, the deterrent is not going to have any effect. Although the deterrent is welcome, it will be extremely important to let motorists in Ontario recognize how important it is to everybody in this province to make sure that children are safe when they're exiting or departing from their school bus drop-off point.

I have to say, again, in listening to some of the debate that's come up on this particular point, that there have been some concerns that the issue of the fine is going to be subject to the vehicle that is found to be moving around the bus. The issue then becomes one of whether or not it's appropriate to fine the vehicle when the driver might not be the owner of the vehicle. So there are some issues around how we make sure that not only the owner of the vehicle but the actual driver who perhaps is the one who's breaking the law, the one who's causing the offence to occur, is the one who's being sanctioned in this particular legislation.

We have to make sure that it's actually the driver who is fined, because that driver can then go on and drive other people's cars and never have learned their lesson, per se, never have been actually deterred from this kind of behaviour. If they're driving someone else's vehicle and the vehicle is the one that is the object of the fine rather than the driver, then you can see that that driver will learn very little from that experience if they're not the ones who are receiving demerit points and who are receiving the fines. Quite frankly, that's a bit of a concern, and it is something that we really need to address, in my opinion.

1610

The other piece of this legislation, Bill 73, is the issue of graduated licenses. Specifically, it speaks to the number of passengers that are permitted by a G2 driver. Basically what this bill, or this intended legislation, will do is to restrict the number of passengers a G2 driver age 19 and under can carry. For the first six months, these drivers can carry one passenger under the age of 19 and then, for the balance of their time in G2 or until that driver turns 20, they could carry up to three passengers age 19 and under. Of course, these particular new requirements will not be in force if the G2 driver is accompanied by a fully licensed driver with at least four years of driving experience or, in fact, if family members are the passengers, regardless of their age.

Again, you can see that what this legislation purports to do, what this bill purports to do, is basically tighten up the restrictions around the new drivers because, of course, statistically it's very clear that accidents tend to be in larger numbers with younger drivers. I believe the point of this piece on graduated licences is basically to make sure that young drivers who are learning the ropes of the roads are not unduly putting other passengers at risk, so they're reducing the number of young people who can have passengers in their car while they're going through the process of learning.

It's something that I think is very laudable, but the only thing I would be a little bit concerned about is whether or not there are some extenuating circumstances that may come up that may require, in an emergency, the drivers to carry passengers who are outside this particular bill. What you do, obviously, is you try to put restrictions on that make it safe for the majority. Hopefully, if the minority or the odd person needs or finds themselves in an emergency situation where they are required to carry passengers who don't quite fit the letter of this particular law, then it would be the responsibility, obviously, of any officer who would attend such a scenario to be able to determine whether in fact there's a bona fide reason for that to be happening. If it's a responsible situation with a responsible young person, I'm sure these kinds of things can be dealt with at any time.

One of the things, though, that I think is most important about Bill 73 is the fact that when you look at the school bus issue, when you look at the new requirements that school boards are going to need to be putting in place for their school buses, it's out of step with the government's commitment in funding school transportation.

I think the actual pieces of the change are important and they're appropriate. The arm is absolutely necessary and I think all new buses should definitely have it. But what needs to go in tandem with that is the commitment by the government to make sure the school boards have the tools, have the resources, to be able to finance those changes.

Some would say most school boards contract those services to bus companies, and of course that's true. If the bus companies, however, are going to be required to change their fleets or to put new features on new buses coming into their fleets, then those costs are simply going to be transferred over to the transportation budgets of the school boards.

You heard even as recently as today the fact that school boards in Ontario are not going to be treated fairly under the new transportation funding formula. We know that at least half of the boards, come next year, are going to see significant—in some cases minor, 4%, 5%, 6%, and in other cases extremely significant, 30% or 40%—decreases in the amount of funding they're going to receive for transportation.

So on the one hand the message is, "Let's work together. Let's increase the safety of students who are riding in our buses in the school system." On the other hand the message is, "But you're really on your own. You have to come up with solutions on your own. In fact, we're going to be withdrawing the very resources you need as a school board to make sure those children get the kind of safe transportation they need," not to mention the fact that the school funding formula for transportation, I would suggest, puts many students in a situation where they're no longer eligible for school bus funding.

Interestingly enough, I heard from some parents from the Durham District School Board a couple weeks ago claim that between 600 and 1,000 families have at least one child being cut out of bus service altogether as a result of cuts that already exist in their transportation budgets. When boards cut those transportation budgets, these kids are being forced to walk longer distances, oftentimes on unsafe roads and on roads without side-walks.

Even in the city of Hamilton, one of the controversial issues the boards deal with is, as they reduce the amount of transportation that's available in an inner-city school, for example—maybe it's only five, six or seven blocks that a child has to walk; however, what's not taken into consideration is the kind of environment those children are walking in. I speak specifically to extremely fast-moving, one-way streets that are huge pedestrian barriers for the most capable people in terms of an urban environment, never mind young children who are trying to get to school, oftentimes distracted by their friends and different things like that. So when you look at the safety of children, it's much greater than arms on a school bus; it's a matter of making real commitments to school boards and to children around how they get to school and how they get home from school in the most safe fashion.

Quite frankly, transportation funding overall is not much different from what happened with the previous

government. Promises were made around transportation funds and there was supposed to be a new program to fund transportation and school boards, but in fact what the Liberals are calling an equalization program actually means that some boards are going to do fairly well while a good half of the boards across Ontario are going to be in serious trouble when it comes to transportation costs. It's quite an untenable situation when the government is bringing these kinds of mixed messages. On one hand, Bill 73 talks about the safety of children and youth on Ontario roads, and on the other, there's a lack of commitment around putting the tools in place to make that happen.

What we see is more than 30 boards of education losing funds for buses, beginning in the 2005-06 year. I know that some of the government members here will say, "We've got a 2% increase across the board this year. Everybody's doing great. All the boards are getting funded very well this year." The issue is not this year; the issue is the discussion paper that was released and the proposal for what they are calling Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario. Again, that looks forward to the 2005-06 year, theoretically right around the time this bill actually might make it through the whole legislative process and come into force. We would have a situation where the very time these new requirements are being implemented is the exact same time when all these 31 boards are being reduced in terms of their school bus transportation allocation. What that does is it really hurts families, children and parents, as opposed to helping them when it comes to safe access to schools and a safe return from school.

The list is available for everyone to see. It's provided in the consultation document, so anybody who might be watching who's concerned about or interested in what their particular school board has in store for it for the 2005-06 school year, it's available. I'm sure the ministry office can actually provide you with that information if the board doesn't have it on hand.

Just in wrapping up the points on Bill 73, it is a bill that purports to deal with child and youth safety. It has a lot of good pieces to it, specifically around the bus arm and particularly around the new requirements for booster seats. I think where there are some challenges is around the way that fines are implemented, the way that vehicles are fined or sanctioned, as opposed to the drivers, and how we get that deterrent effect, if it's not the driver, himself or herself, who has caused the infraction that's actually getting the sanction.

1620

The last, and probably the most important, piece is that at the same time the government is wanting to make some changes with school buses, they're putting these new tools in place on the one hand for children's safety and transportation in the school bus system, while on the other hand, they're taking away the ability of the boards to pay for those changes. They're taking away the ability for 31 of our school boards across the province to be able

to implement the retrofitting or the increased safety features of any new school buses that are coming on line for the fleets in the next couple of years.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments about Bill 73. I spoke to this bill during the second reading debate, but I did want to make a few comments after the member from Hamilton West gave her presentation.

This bill is about safety for children and the very young. We know that almost 1,000 children and young people are killed or seriously injured on our highways each and every year. We also have heard that 33% of school bus drivers experience illegal passing each and every day. We also know that an unrestrained child, in a 50-kilometre crash, has comparable injuries to a child dropped from a third-storey window. So we know very well what can happen to persons without the protection that we must indeed now put in place for our youth and small children. Bill 73 addresses those needs.

I want to thank the minister for incorporating the idea of school bus safety. I introduced a bill in 1996, and introduced it subsequently six other times, to help bus drivers and others identify those who are passing school buses illegally. The member from Hamilton West is concerned about the fact that perhaps we may not be identifying the actual driver in this case. Under the current law, the bus driver must identify the driver of an offending vehicle. It is almost impossible to do so. Daylight hours, the speed of the vehicle, the fact that the vehicle may be passing the bus from the back to the front and all manner of circumstances make that very difficult. As well, the bus driver is watching that our most precious cargo, our children, either get on the bus or get off the bus. Some 50,000 names have come to me in petition form. Police, school boards, bus owner-operators, drivers and a host of individuals and groups across Ontario support this new initiative.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the member from Hamilton East's lead-off speech. I know that the bill does some important things in improvements to the safety of our children, and who's going to argue about anything that would protect our children and our community?

But I do want to put on the record, and it's important to note for the citizens, that although this bill is bringing forward additional safety features, there have been numerous studies done on the safety of our school transportation system as it is today. I have to say that I understand that the people who transport our school-children each and every day—I believe something like 800,000 young people a day are transported on our school buses—do a fantastic job. I've worked with the School Bus Operators' Association of Ontario a lot over the last three or four years, and I want to pay my respect to that organization, because I think it's important to note that there are very few accidents on school buses today. That's not to say that any other additional piece of legis-

lation would not make additional improvements, because one accident or one problem is one too many when it comes to our schoolchildren.

It's important to note that probably the safest place schoolchildren can be when they're on the roads and the highways of our province is in a school bus. I think that's been proven over and over again, and I want to put that on the record today, because I do think that school bus operators are not getting enough respect in this manner, and enough credit for the great job they do.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was so pleased that Ms Horwath, our member from Hamilton East, spoke to this bill on behalf of the New Democratic Party. Ms Horwath has demonstrated herself, in such short order, to be one of the most effective members of this assembly, to be a credit to the community she represents and, I tell you, she's made a huge difference to New Democrats, not the least of which is with respect to party status here. Ms Horwath has shown herself eager and capable in debate.

I'll be speaking to this bill in due course, but I find it incredible that this bill was introduced on May 4 and yet is only now being called by this government for second reading.

There are some aspects of this bill, quite frankly, that cry out for speedy passage. If the member for Chatham-Kent Essex—I'm well aware of his history around school bus legislation; he just spoke to it briefly in his two minutes—could get his whip or his government House leader to sever the provisions that create vicarious liability, I say we could have that passed this afternoon.

There are other provisions in the bill, though, that necessarily have to go to committee. That's just the nature of the beast. Now, I didn't decide back in May not to call this bill on behalf of the government. I didn't make that decision. The government decided to let it moulder and acquire dust on a shelf. New Democrats are debating it now, and I say to this government, let's keep this bill on the front burner until the debate has ended so we can send it off to committee, let it get the prompt consideration it needs in committee and then it will come back as soon as the government wants it to come back for third reading.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm pleased to comment on this, as well.

When this bill first came forward, I was talking to a number of mothers and grandmothers, and they were talking about what it was like when they grew up, when they would get into the car with their parents or grandparents. There were no booster seats and no seat belts. You might have 10 kids clambering around in the back of the station wagon, standing up and roaming around. There was no consideration of this sort of thing at all.

We discussed how it might be a bit onerous if you have to have a booster seat in grandma's car and a booster seat when carpooling; it might be a problem logistically or financially onerous. But these changes have come. There's been an evolution in the way we approach child safety in our cars. So from the time when

the kids were just scrambling around all over the place in the back of the station wagon, to today, when we have very well constructed booster seats and car safety seats for our kids, you wouldn't even think about getting in the car and letting your kid roam around or drive anywhere without your child strapped in properly to either a booster seat or, at the very least, a safety belt.

This is just part of the evolution in safety, and I'm very pleased to see that our minister has moved very quickly, that it is one of his major first initiatives to get this front and centre, and that the children of this province will be that much safer. Again, maybe it will be a bit of an inconvenience, maybe it will be a little expensive here and there, but nobody will argue that any safety measure we take is priceless. This is one of those priceless pieces of legislation that we're putting forward, and I'm very proud that our government is doing that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has up to two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I appreciate the comments of all the members who have spoken to my debate on this bill. Just from the comments people have made, it seems to me that everybody in this place and time would agree that the kinds of initiatives this bill brings forward are important to children and families. I think that where we might have some fine tuning, that can be appropriately done in committee, as my colleague Peter Kormos has indicated in his remarks. But overall I think that work needs to be gotten at, because Bill 73 is something that, once it gets to those fine tuning opportunities and once it's brought back for third reading and is passed, we'll see some real, positive initiatives. If those can be accompanied by some financial supports from the government, particularly to school boards in regard to school bus retrofitting and/or the changes in specs for new school bus fleets in the province for the various school boards, I think that would be appropriate.

Hopefully, it's simply a matter of some concentration and focus around moving this legislation forward, getting it to the next steps, getting it through committee and having it come back in a form that I think everybody will agree can cause some really major improvements in the safety of children, from the perspective of public transportation in school buses and also in the private automobile around booster seats, as well as with G2 drivers.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged to stand today to speak in support of Bill 73, which I haven't spoken about before. I think it's a great bill. It has to go forward and pass. If this bill passes, it will make safety more available to all generations.

I was listening carefully to the member from Hamilton East when she was speaking about the bill in detail. I was impressed by her eloquence and support of the bill. It comforts me a lot when you see members opposite speak in support of this bill, because it creates safety for all of us: seniors, children, all kinds of people.

I was listening to her concern in terms of some issues, especially about drivers. If someone was driving a different car and violated the rules and regulations, it shouldn't be the owner of the car who is fined but the driver. Hopefully when the bill goes to committee, we'll notice that issue, because I believe it is a very important element of the bill.

Also, I was listening to other members, especially the member from Simcoe North. He explained that the bill is an attack on bus fleets and the people who are driving buses across the province. I don't think so. I agree with him that bus drivers across the province do an excellent job. They do a wonderful job. They are very careful, and they are great people who deliver our children to school.

What is very important, as the member from Stoney Creek mentioned, is that with the advance of our society and the advance of life, a part of our evolution—I remember that when I was a little boy, I used to be driven to school by bus or by station wagon. Booster seats weren't an issue back then. Traffic wasn't an issue back then, because the number of cars was very small. But we're talking about a high-tech society, a fast society. We're talking about a massive number of cars passing back and forth. I think that as part of this evolution, we should implement that safety element in our driving act in this province.

I agree with the member from Niagara Centre when he agreed and supported the bill. Hopefully, all our colleagues in the opposition will agree to it and pass it. Let's do it quickly and fast, because I believe it is overdue, especially when I heard my colleague the member from Chatham-Kent Essex. He introduced that bill six times in the past and it didn't go. I was surprised.

If all the members believed in safety, especially the opposition when they were the government, why didn't they pass it for the children, for our young generation?

This is a very important bill. We should all support it. I believe now this bill is going to see the light with the minister and with our government, because we believe in safety and protecting our children for the future.

I also want to go back to the member from Hamilton East when she was talking about how the boards are going to absorb the cost. I don't believe so, because most of the boards across the province contract transportation to different companies. I think those companies, whatever companies, not because they are not doing an excellent job but because they have to live with this new era, should live up to the safety expectations for our kids. They should update their fleet. We're not forcing every bus to fit the whole conditions, such as having an exit on both sides, but any bus being built after January 2005 should meet these requirements and these conditions.

I think, yes, create new standards. The member from Perth-Middlesex agrees with me. He's a great member. He also believes in the need for safety in the bus industry and not to undermine their ability to do the job. I want to take the opportunity right now from this House to extend my great and sincere thanks to them for doing an excellent job, eliminating trouble and driving carefully.

But our duty as a government is to put in the mechanism to protect our kids in the future, to create the safety, the important thing about this bill. Hopefully, in the end all of us are going to vote in support and pass it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Bill 73 is a very important bill for our youth so that they are safe on our school buses. There's nothing more important for our future, of course, than the safety of our children. All too often, we hear about accidents involving school buses. It always brings a lump to your throat until you hear that all the children are safe or their injuries are minor. Of course, when you're putting seat belts on school buses, it's important that the cost and funding of these seat belts is properly done. School bus companies have contracts with school boards, and the contracts didn't include the outfitting of school buses with seat belts, so obviously that is a concern. It's being funded by rural communities. Of course, these rural communities won't be receiving, or very few of them will be receiving, any of the fuel tax revenues that—

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Some 350 communities are not receiving any of the fuel tax for the improvement of roads, to make sure the roads are safe for school buses to travel on, to make sure the communities that these school buses travel through are properly signed, that the roads are properly maintained and that the snow is properly removed from them. But no, there are 350 communities in Ontario that won't be receiving a nickel of that gas tax. The gas tax will only go to large cities. Mainly it will go to the city of Toronto, of course. That's where this government seems to have its focus, on the city of Toronto. If Toronto wants to wag the tail of the province, I suppose that's what this government sees as appropriate funding for what is, of course, a very controversial issue when you get out into the farm communities in rural Ontario where none—none—of the gas tax will be ending up.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to respond to the remarks of my colleague from London-Fanshawe and to speak in favour of Bill 73.

First of all, I just want to correct a few misimpressions that have perhaps been left.

This bill does not put seat belts on school buses. We need to be clear about that.

There have been some concerns raised about whether or not school boards will be able to manage the cost of putting the arm on the front of the school buses. In fact, what is already happening in the vast majority of cases is that as school boards are replacing their stock or the bus operators are replacing the stock, the majority of operators in the province are already putting the arms on the buses. This just formalizes the standard.

1640

The really important part of this legislation is the ability to simply fine a driver based on identifying the car. As a trustee, I know that for years school bus operators, school bus drivers and parents came to me and

said, "People are illegally passing school buses and there is nothing I can do about it, because the existing legislation requires me to get a positive identification of the driver."

Well, how can you possibly do that as a school bus driver when you've got a bus full of little kiddies and somebody ignores the flashing lights and goes driving past your bus? What you're trying to do is manage the problem. You're not going to be able to get a positive ID of the driver.

With this legislation, all you have to do is get the plate number and the driver, or at least the owner of the car, will be fined for breaking the law. This is a great improvement in student safety, and I support it.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased again to rise and make comments on the member from London-Fanshawe's speech. I think he brought in some points, of course.

I would like to pick up a little on what my colleague from Halton was saying, and that's how rural Ontario—most of the school buses that operate in our province operate in rural Ontario. He has a very legitimate point, and that's this whole idea of the gas tax. I hope that maybe my colleague from Erie-Lincoln will bring this up in his 20-minute speech a few minutes from now.

It's amazing that we're expecting municipalities in rural Ontario to build good roads—we want good roads and good bridges—yet all the gas tax money is going to the urban centres, and I can't understand why. That seems to be a very unfair way of allocating the money everyone pays. Don't the people in the township of Severn or the township of Ramara deserve to have some of that gas tax put back into their areas? Why should their money go into the city of Orillia or the city of Toronto? They're all paying gas tax.

They need that money to make these roads good and safe and smooth—the same with the bridges—and they can be used, of course, to further transportation. If the roads and bridges are rough, it's harder on the buses, it costs more to operate the buses and the buses become unsafe. I think we should do a lot more debate on that.

The other thing I'm amazed at is why the Liberals are not debating this. You had a 20-minute chance to speak and you only spoke for like four minutes. I think we have to get around to debating this bill. The minister wants this passed and wants it well debated, so let's debate it.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make remarks on the speech of the member from London-Fanshawe in regard to Bill 73. I think what he had to say in his brief remarks, quite clearly, is something most of the people in the Legislature would agree with; that is, the importance of ensuring the safety of children, in particular when it comes to their participation on our roadways, whether it's in school buses or as passengers in their parents' cars or as passengers in the cars of older brothers and sisters. It is clearly an important discussion and debate for us to be having.

I think his remarks are what I would call motherhood remarks. As a mother, I would vouch for that quite clearly. And as the mother of a son who has been

transported and is currently being transported in a school bus—in fact, just a couple of weeks ago he became a school bus patroller in his school bus. Yes, my son Julian Leonetti is a school bus patroller and quite proudly so. In partnership with the automobile association in Hamilton, he got some training around how to help maintain order in a school bus.

Again, the issues around how school boards cover off the costs of making sure those buses are adequately retrofitted or adequately upgraded is still an issue. And again, the issues around who is being charged and fined when there are infractions of the various recommendations in this bill—I think it's still really important, and I look forward to this bill being moved along in the process.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to reply.

Mr Ramal: I'm honoured again to stand and comment on what my colleagues said about this bill. I can sense from the feeling around this House that all parties can support it, except for a few minor issues. I know that the member from Simcoe North is trying to move the debate in different directions. I want to assure the member that other issues will be fully debated in the House, but now we're talking about the safety of buses and how we can ensure that our kids are safe and comfortable when they go to school. That's what we're talking about today. I think Bill 73 speaks to this issue in detail.

I also listened to my colleague for Hamilton East. She had concerns about the costs incurred in implementing the bill. But already, the majority of the bus operators across the province have agreed to equip their buses with all the equipment needed to ensure the safety of our kids.

I want to bring up a very important issue: I think insurance will go down, the more safety features you add to make the bus safer. It is a part of our safety in general, and I believe this bill details the entire concern, not just from the government's side but from the whole population.

I listened a lot of the people in my riding of London-Fanshawe, and they were happy and thrilled about the implementing of this bill and about pushing this bill to be passed. If this bill passes, I think it will create a lot better environment around the schools. That's why I support it. I'm also here to listen to more people talk about it. I'm convinced that the majority of my colleagues in this House will support it, and I believe we are going in the right direction.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I just learned from Tory insider Debbie Hutton that Tim Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln, is turning all of 37 today. It's just amazing how we watched that young Hudak boy grow up in front of our very eyes. I found it interesting—and the Legislature would want to know—that Ms Hutton is taking the matter in hand herself.

The Deputy Speaker: That certainly is not a point of order, although I started to hear somebody sing something. From what I heard, we don't want that.

Further debate? The member for Erie-Lincoln has the floor.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thank you very much, Speaker, and thanks to my colleague from Niagara Centre—

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: —and to my colleagues from across the way—Simcoe North, the Minister of Transportation and others; Brantford, very kind too, and by the looks of him, I would think him my junior by one or two years.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: One year junior. Happy birthday to the member from Brantford.

I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature to speak to Bill 73 on this November 1, which is my 37th birthday. And what better place to be for my birthday than in the assembly, Speaker, with the likes of yourself and my good friend for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, among others.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): You're sick.

Mr Hudak: The member says I need some help. That could be the case, but maybe my wife will rescue me later this evening with something different than speeches.

The Deputy Speaker: We'll want to know what that is, since you brought it up.

Mr Hudak: I'll report back accordingly.

Bill 73 according to my notes, deals with child booster seats, school bus safety and changes to the graduated licensing system in Ontario. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Transportation is here in the assembly this evening to listen to our debate on this legislation. I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for his comments as well. I do think it's always important to point out the dead minutes that have occurred in debate—the number of minutes available to government members that were not taken up once more—which I think is an unfortunate trend that we in the opposition are seeing as we debate these so-called important bills.

I would—

Ms Mossop: We're more succinct.

1650

Mr Hudak: The member says they're more succinct, and maybe every member of the assembly opposite will speak to Bill 73. It remains to be seen but, certainly, I look forward to taking advantage of the entire 20 minutes available to me as a member to address the issues with respect to Bill 73, to try to point out some of the concerns that I, myself, may have with provisions in particular sections of the bill. As well, I think it's important to bring forward those that have been expressed by my constituents on Bill 73.

My colleague a bit earlier had talked about—and the Minister of Transportation is here, which is a good thing to see—the importance to the minister, as well as debate for Bill 73, of the Minister of Transportation and his capacity to make decisions with respect to the distribution of the gas tax in the province. There's certainly a feeling from our caucus that, while the funding for transit will be welcome and will finally be flowing for municipalities with transit systems—they will make the proper investments and improve the transit and be, no doubt,

thankful for that—there are, at the same time, 340 municipalities across Ontario that will be receiving no gas tax funding whatsoever despite the fact, by way of example, that the folks in Beamsville, at the Pioneer gas station on Ontario and Green Lane, fully pay the same amount of taxes as others across the province but will not receive a dollar back in investments through the gas tax.

Mr Chudleigh: How can they do that?

Mr Hudak: The colleague from Halton asks, how can they do that? I think it's important for us in the assembly to recognize two classes of municipalities: the transit haves and the transit have-nots. The difference is that those with transit systems receive the gas tax funding and those without transit systems, despite the fact that they pay gas taxes, do not receive any needed funding for road or bridge repair. Certainly, a good number of those roads, which municipal councillors would argue are in need of maintenance, and a number of those bridges that were constructed 30 or 40 years ago or longer will be in need of substantial investment.

So the government continues down that path. We would argue on this side of the House that it's incumbent upon them to create a similarly generous program to help out those municipalities that aren't receiving the gas tax, that don't have transit, so they can address the roads and bridges issues. So we'd like to see a substantially similar program, and I know the Minister of Transportation is taking that into consideration in his deliberations with his cabinet colleagues.

As a general comment on Bill 73, I think it's important to take into context a general and, I would argue, disturbing trend by the Dalton McGuinty government that the government is the solution to every ache and pain or problem across the province. Sure, it's important for the Legislature to act at certain times—that's the best course of action—but I do wonder if appropriate thought has been given to a number of these measures, if this is a key area for the Legislature to act in and, if it is, is in the best interests of the province to legislate or regulate in a particular area. Are there ample resources being made available to partners—police forces, for example—to help to enforce these laws and make them enforceable?

I do worry about Bill 73 and some of the provisions in Bill 73, particularly sections 1, 2, 3 and 5, about their enforceability, unless there are also resources being allocated to school boards, to police officers and potentially to municipalities to ensure their enforcement. Let me give you some examples, because certainly a definition of a Conservative would include that you legislate or regulate only when necessary. If there are other avenues available to solve or address a particular problem, including common sense, you should look at that first and foremost. Legislation should be one of the last tools and only used if necessary, right? The way to the province of law, all those resources brought to bear, should be prioritized as the most important issues of the day.

I think that the Dalton McGuinty government, I say to my friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, has gone a bit bananas for bans. You have. You've

banned a lot of things, or you're in the process of banning a lot of things. This legislation is part of that mentality with respect to enforcing particular activities. Let me give you some examples.

Well, there was a famously infamous week a couple of weeks ago when the Minister of Health came out, emerged from a cabinet meeting, beat his chest and said, "We're going to ban sushi in the province of Ontario."

Mr Levac: You never get sushi.

Mr Hudak: I like sushi. I wonder what the minister has against sushi. I wonder about that new sushi restaurant on Thompson and Garrison in Fort Erie, in my riding, the town where I was born and raised, if there is something wrong. I think the sushi they serve is terrific and they seem to be doing all right, but I'd bet you they would wonder why the Minister of Health suddenly emerged from cabinet and said, "You know what? We're going to ban sushi in the province of Ontario."

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): He probably doesn't like sushi.

Mr Hudak: If that's the decision, if he doesn't like sushi personally, I don't think he should ban it for everybody else. Secondly—

Mr Yakabuski: If next year he doesn't like pizza, do you think he'll ban pizza?

Mr Hudak: I certainly hope he doesn't ban pizza. That would be worse than banning sushi.

The question too for my colleagues opposite: Is that the best use of health care workers' resources? Is that the best thing for public health inspectors, to be going into the kitchens across Ontario and banning sushi?

Interjection: Some will make you sick.

Mr Hudak: I know some of you believe that, but this is my reasoning.

Secondly, his colleague, quick on the heels of the health minister's announcement, threw down the gauntlet and said he was going after the Three Musketeers. He was going to hunt down every last gummi bear that stalked the hallways of our province's schools, saying that he was going to ban every one of these particular foods in all of the schools in the province.

Obviously, good eating habits are important, no doubt about it, but look at the irony: The week before, he watered down provincial tests considerably, part of that announcement lowering standards. So I wonder, if you talked to Ontario parents, Ontario taxpayers, whether they would think the priority should be raising standards in the classroom or banning gummi bears from vending machines. I'd bet that 99.9% of the time they would say, "Raise the standards." Unfortunately now, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, a student could fail one of either reading or writing in the literacy test—the reading or writing components—they could actually fail one of those and still reach the literacy standards. I think that's regrettable. I think part of literacy is being able to both read and write. Particularly if these students that you purport to care about want to get into the workforce, I think it is vital that they pass the reading and writing components—whether it is French or English, I say to the

minister of francophone affairs—as long as they pass those standards. I think it's regrettable that the minister is part of a government that is watering down those standards and then saying they're targeting gummi bears instead.

The third strike in the week of the ban bonanza, the bonanza of bans that very same week, is pit bulls. Suddenly, the most important law-and-order issue in all of Ontario was to ban pit bulls. Certainly attacks by vicious dogs is something that comes up from time to time. My suggestion would be to raise the negligence penalties against owners of all vicious dogs instead of concentrating on a particular breed. That having been said, I find it curious with the minister's bill that he has put all of the time of his Attorney General's staff, lawyers, and then police officers and municipal enforcement officers, into banning certain breeds of dogs.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Erie-Lincoln, speaking of "from time to time," from time to time I would like to hear some comments on Bill 73.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Yakabuski: It is his birthday. You could give a little bit of latitude.

Interjection: Happy birthday, Minister—or former minister.

Mr Hudak: Former minister; the formerly honourable, now no longer honourable, member.

The point I'm trying to make is that the government has a proclivity, they've got a habit, of trying to dictate behaviour for taxpayers across Ontario from Queen's Park, a habit of trying to micromanage. If you do that from time to time when you think it's a priority, fine. Bill 73 does that in a number of ways: the changes to G2 licensing, for example. Certainly, section 3 with respect to child booster seats is consistent with this behaviour of dictating from above what mom and dad or grandma are going to be doing, including bringing snack food into the schools, including what kind of pets they may—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, no. But you're telling mom and pop, mom and dad, one or both of the parents or the grandparents, what kind of dogs they can have. You're also telling them what kind of snacks are going to be available in schools, and you're certainly telling them that they can't bring sushi home.

1700

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, you've got this tendency, and that's certainly part of Bill 73, by dictating particular types—by regulation, mind you. The actual booster seat changes are not in legislation, I want to say to those watching at home or those in the gallery; they'll be done by regulation. The Minister of Transportation will think up to what age children will have to have booster seats, present it to cabinet and then it would become sort of the stated law in the province without any kind of debate in the Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I think I've always had a bit of a libertarian streak in me, maybe not 100% of the time, but I

think it's an important value to bring to the debate and I'm trying to do that.

Let's say, for example, the Minister of Transportation says that all children up to a certain number of kilograms, or even eight- or nine-year-olds, have booster seats everywhere they go—and I think we need to realize this could impose a financial liability on a lot of working families in the province.

Now, if this was the only thing that you did in this realm, the only increased cost to the taxpayer, the burden would not be as great, but working families in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario are now facing the following: If both are working, they're facing a punishing new health care tax that could take up to \$1,000 from the pockets of working families in the province. I would argue that already taxes are far too high. For a working family, a middle-class family could be paying up to a \$1,000 each in additional health care tax annually, and, as we argued in question period, many will see a reduction in health care services in return for their higher tax.

Hydro rates, I ask my colleague from Durham, have gone up some 20%?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This is the plan.

Mr Hudak: The plan is to increase them some 20%, and maybe even higher. So not only are taxpayers paying a significantly higher Dalton McGuinty health care premium or tax or premi-ax or whatever it is, they'll be paying higher hydro bills on top of that. In fact, I believe that there were about 50 new tax or fee increases—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Well, hopefully we'll have a chance to get to that, but there were 50 tax or fee increases as part of Dalton McGuinty's first budget, and that's just to start, I fear. This is including increases in drivers' licensing fees, for example, and increased tax on alcohol and tobacco. I know that there is work to ban some of those substances anyway in certain places. I think you have to realize that with the higher tax, the higher hydro, the higher licensing fees, the affordability of child booster seats adds into that, taking more of the resources out of the pockets of working families. They like to jump to a simple conclusion that somehow this means that members of the opposition are against child safety. No, quite the opposite; we support child safety. At the same time, you have to realize—

Mr Yakabuski: We're just not sure about that Big Brother world you guys are talking about.

Mr Hudak: The Big Brother world, the nanny state, that you seem to be creating on the opposite side where, increasingly, you are dictating the behaviour of parents across the province of Ontario in a realm of circumstances. You're also taking away their financial ability to make decisions and investments for their own family—saving for their son's future, helping their daughter go off to university—by taking more money out of their pockets.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Soon they won't have them.

Mr Hudak: I think that there is a dangerous trend that I'm seeing as part of Bill 73 which is making these things

unaffordable. Grandparents too; I mean, here are individuals that are on fixed incomes, and—you're too young to be a grandfather, I would say to my colleague from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): He's got six.

Mr Hudak: He's a grandfather of six. Well, congratulations, but imagine if you were taking all six in the van to an event, maybe to a Christmas celebration or such. If this bill passes, you'll have to purchase six booster seats, potentially, for those individuals. If you get a high-quality booster seat, for example, that could be 600 bucks.

Mr O'Toole: Now he has to buy an SUV.

Mr Hudak: It could be about \$600. It depends on your financial background. I certainly don't know that about my colleagues, but I do know that a lot of working people in the Niagara region or Dunnville would find an additional \$600 quite a burden in taxes or increased fees being mandated. On top of that, there's higher hydro and higher taxes, among the other things that I have listed so far. This would be in every circumstance. Even if it was the occasional trip the kids were going on, you would dictate that that car would have to have—that van, in this example—would have to have six booster seats.

I remember with great fondness my time as a coach, coaching soccer, kids about nine to 12 years old, different age categories—I enjoyed it, I miss it. Certainly, volunteer coaches—I wasn't coaching a big all-star team; I was coaching a house-league team—from time to time will need to transport the players from game to game, from place to place. If Bill 73 passes, that coach would be required to purchase booster seats for all the children who fit into that category.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Did you take them to Buffalo for a game?

Mr Hudak: No, I never took them across the border for a game. We just simply played in the Niagara region.

That having been said, I think there would be a lot of coaches who would find that to be a significant financial hardship and then who may not volunteer to coach or who won't transport the kids. So I think you have to realize that there are some probably unintended consequences of this particular bill.

I do ask my colleagues—you'll be debating this in caucus, and maybe we'll debate it in the House. The Minister of Transportation should take into consideration, at the very least, if the government is going to move ahead with Bill 73—will you bring in some sort of financial support system for families who find this to be a fiscal burden, PST relief, by way of example, or something to help relieve the mounting pressure that working families are feeling because of the increased taxes, the increased hydro and the increased dictates that the Dalton McGuinty government has brought forward?

Quickly, on section 5, when we were in government under Mike Harris, one reason we rejected photo radar was because it penalized the vehicle and not the driver. In fact, my suggested solution is to put more police officers on the highways and streets. I strongly encourage the government to actually move forward with fully funding

the additional 1,000 police officers across the province of Ontario—certainly one of your keynote platform commitments during the election, but we have yet to see a single one of these officers. As our very able critic the member from Simcoe North has said, you're not fully funding these police officers, although from your campaign commitment it certainly sounded like it would be 100% provincial dollars.

Mr Yakabuski: Do you mean they may have broken a promise or two?

Mr Hudak: I hate to say it, but it appears that you might be hitting the 40-broken-promises barrier by down-loading the cost of police officers on to municipalities, when my recollection of the campaign commitment was that you were going to fund 1,000 new police officers.

I'd much rather that you hire more police officers to catch speeders, dangerous drivers and those who go past a school bus without stopping, rather than giving a bus driver more enforcement provisions or a version of photo radar on buses that would catch the bus as opposed to the exact individual who is driving that bus.

So I do have some significant concerns about Bill 73, particularly about the costs of the bill to working families, the enforceability of the act and the photo radar approach to school bus safety—sadly, all part of a government's approach that seems to think dictates from Queen's Park are better than solutions found locally or within families.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make comments on the debate brought forward by Mr Hudak, the member for Erie-Lincoln. Actually, I think he brought some quite interesting points to the discussion today, particularly starting off with the issue around the lack of debate coming from the government side on this particular bill but also going on to talk about things like the need for more funding for municipalities for things like road and bridge repairs. Although I think public transit is a good use of the gas tax dollars, coming from a municipality that has lots of significant rural areas, I certainly understand how difficult it is for those municipalities to maintain those pieces of infrastructure when they're not getting the support they need from other levels of government.

He also spoke a little bit about—what did he call it?—the ban bonanza, the bonanza ban?

Mr Hudak: The ban bonanza.

Ms Horwath: He raised some concerns around whether or not there are really the appropriate resources being put in place to make sure that some of these initiatives are able to be enforced and that they're not just empty kinds of gestures; that in fact municipalities, police departments and school boards are given the supports they need to enforce new legislation of this stature when it gets to that point.

He also spoke, of course, about other bans, like banning sushi and banning junk food in schools and those kinds of things, in relation to how this bill is also a ban on various activities.

1710

One of things he raised, though, that I thought was important was the issue of volunteers, particularly in the field of sports, and how the graduated licence restrictions might affect the ability of volunteer coaches to transport kids. I thought that was a very interesting point and a good one. Finally, he spoke about the financial burden that some of these initiatives might have on municipalities. I think they were all interesting parts of the debate.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member from Erie-Lincoln, and I can tell you that I wish he would have gone directly to Bill 73, because half of the time he spent on other things—that we are to blame at the present time, but they should be to blame, because they left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Also, the hydro rate—they got a cap at 4.3, which has created a deficit at Hydro of \$380 million. They said that we implemented the health tax, but in the past they promised that hospitals would get additional equipment to relieve waiting times. They made promises, promises, promises. They never responded to the needs of hospitals. They left us with that deficit.

Let me tell you, on the booster side: I used to travel with a hockey team and had the whole team in my car. I do realize now the danger this was causing, and that I would have been responsible if an accident had occurred. We just have to remember what happened to that poor lady in Quebec. She had a private daycare and travelled with eight kids in the car. Seven of them were killed. They didn't have booster seats. They didn't have car seats. I will definitely go ahead and buy a child's car seat to travel around with my grandson Joshua.

In 2002, 149 children and young people were killed on the roads. We want to prevent this. We want safety for all of our children. If this past government does not support this bill, it's because they just don't care about our kids.

Mr O'Toole: I couldn't resist responding to the member from Erie-Lincoln, because he did cover a lot of things that concern my constituents in the riding of Durham. I don't think he was wrong in pointing out some of the vacant promises by the Liberal government.

I do want to respond to Bill 73, specifically on one section. I am a grandparent. My daughter Rebecca has two of our grandchildren. Lhose is her name. They are coming from Australia this Christmas. In fact, they'll be here in about three weeks. They have two children under the age of two. Of course, as a grandparent, I want to do the right thing.

We're just in the process of determining the right vintage of safety seats for children while transporting them in vehicles, because we'll be supplying the vehicle for them here. We're not only going to have to rent a vehicle for them, but now, under mandatory law, we're going to have to make sure that we have the appropriate seat belts. They'll have to be installed. When I return the rental car, they'll have to be de-installed.

These are expenses that someone like myself, of course, would be more than wanting to be proactive in

providing. But he points out the burden on people who live in Ontario. This bonanza of bans is cause for concern. I've been going to encourage my daughter Rebecca and her husband, David, to return to Ontario when he's finished his military service there. But now, the way Ontario is going, there won't be any opportunities for them. I'm quite concerned.

Out of respect for the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, I want to recognize that your government is finally giving you the just reward for the hard work you've done on school bus safety. In that respect, I think that's the only good thing in the bill, and I'll probably be supporting it for that very reason. You should get the credit. I'm surprised that you aren't a minister, but I hope that Minister Takhar recognizes the work you have contributed to making Ontario's school bus industry safer.

Mr Kormos: I was pleased to hear the comments made by the member for Erie-Lincoln and so pleased that he found the time to make them here. I'm going to speak to this bill, in a few minutes' time, for a modest 20 minutes.

I want people to know this bill was introduced on May 4—that many months ago—and only now is being called for second reading. I find it incredible that the government members now say, "Oh, this bill"—and there is important stuff in this bill; make no mistake about it. Had the school bus issue stood alone, I'm confident there would have been offers to accelerate passage of the bill, because I know we all supported the member for Chatham-Kent Essex when he did private members' bills of the same nature.

The booster seat: People are marketing this, selling this, as a public safety issue, and nobody can quarrel with that. I'm going to be speaking about how effective that particular legislation is going to be in terms of enforceability. We simply don't have—look, this government promised 1,000 new cops, and they end up being 50-cent cops on a good day—

Mr Dunlop: Thirty-cent cops.

Mr Kormos: —hold on, Garfield—50 cents on a good day, and as low as 30-cent cops. So when this government promises 1,000 cops, it wants to reap the goodwill from that kind of public relations exercise. What we're going to find out is that—especially some of those remote and northern and rural parts of Ontario that are already grossly underpoliced are going to find themselves forced to live with the sad status quo rather than the cops that those towns and cities deserve on their streets to help to make their streets safer places to be, and enforce this and other kinds of legislation.

I'll be speaking to this bill in around two minutes' time. I'm looking forward to it, Speaker, and looking forward to the exchanges you and I will have during the course of my contribution to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Erie-Lincoln has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for their comments.

A couple of things, in particular: I appreciate support for my concern that I have heard increasingly from

taxpayers in the province about the Dalton McGuinty government's bad habit of trying to ban, ban, ban. It is a ban bonanza, or a "ban-anza," happening in the province. Once in a while there may be a reason to act, but they are consistently trying to regulate, from Queen's Park, the behaviour of working families in the province of Ontario.

The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell says that everything I spoke about was somehow my fault from the previous government. But I fail to see how the ban on sushi, the ban on gummi bears and the ban on pit bulls are in any way related to the treasury. Unless the gummi bears, led by their team captain the sugar bear, raided the treasury somehow, I fail to see how your argument makes any sense whatsoever or that this tendency to make these kinds of bans has anything to do with the treasury in Ontario. And quite frankly, this notion that the Liberal party has a monopoly on caring about children in the province of Ontario is highly regrettable, and I hope that he will repeal that assertion the next time he has a chance to speak.

Lastly, I want to say too that I would encourage our colleagues here, if they have a chance to slip away from debate, to go down and see the elk and deer farmers. They're having a reception in the dining room; I understand it's a great time. Hopefully you'll have a chance to do that.

As I conclude my remarks, I thank members for their kind words, and now I'll slip away for a nice dinner with my wife as I celebrate my birthday.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I've got but 20 minutes.

As a matter of fact, the member for Erie-Lincoln and I were down on Saturday evening at White Meadows Farm on Effingham Road, where the Niagara South Federation of Agriculture had their annual general meeting and dinner. I was pleased to be with those folks again, a hard-working group of the farming folk from down in the Niagara region, many of them in the farming business for generations and struggling hard, and now, especially down where we're from in Niagara, they're going to be hard-hit, whacked, by the greenbelt legislation.

1720

There isn't even a farmer in town who's going to tell you that they don't support the principle of preserving green areas and controlling—heck, farmers are as familiar as anybody with the need to resist and control high-density municipal urban growth. That's what encroaches on farmland that surrounds municipalities, and that's where you get these incredible conflicts in terms of land usage. You know that. That farmer who has been farming that land, perhaps a fruit farmer like we have down in Niagara, who uses the noisemakers to scare away the birds so they can protect their fruit from the birds—well, before you know it, the people living in that little subdivision around the corner start calling up city hall and complaining about noise and start calling the Ministry of the Environment. When you've got a farmer

putting some fertilizer down on his field—and we're all familiar with fertilizer here—again, we've got the urban neighbours phoning up the Ministry of the Environment and anybody else, saying, "Oh, but it smells." Those are the sorts of conflicts between urban and rural dwellers that farmers are more familiar with than anybody could possibly be. So they well know the need to maintain and preserve agricultural land.

Farmers down where I come from are incredibly committed stewards of some of the province's—no, some of the country's—finest and rarest agricultural land. So, by God, they expect to be treated fairly and they don't expect to have to carry the financial burden all by themselves. They've paid enough of a price throughout the years simply by virtue of being farmers. They don't expect to have to carry the financial burden all by themselves of maintaining some of this greenbelt. In the case of Niagara, a whole lot of it is agricultural and, in the case of Niagara, a whole lot of it is land that is going to be captured by the definitions in the legislation that has no business being in the legislation. I'll be speaking to that come the time to speak to the legislation.

I, for the life of me, don't know when the government intends to call it. I really don't understand. I try. I do my best to try to figure out, to try to understand the rhyme and reason, the methodology, of this government in terms of how it calls legislation. Here we've got a bill that has got to go to committee. The school bus provision has already been dealt with by committee, as I recall, and I'm not concerned about that becoming the subject matter of committee debate, vicarious liability amongst other things, but the booster seat and the provisions for graduated—can I say that? Of course I can say it, but is it relevant?—booster seats, booster seats designed for the size of the child who's going to be sitting in them because there are serious concerns about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of seat belts in cars for a person of smaller stature, like a kid.

Having said that, I question—and I would be pleased to hear from people who have expertise in this area—whether or not it's more incumbent on, for instance, the federal government to create standards for motor vehicle manufacturers to make their motor vehicles more adaptable and safer for passengers of varying sizes. Surely if the safety consideration is built into the vehicle, it begins to address some of the serious and obvious problems about booster seats, about, let's say, the person who just, on occasion, has to drive a nephew, a niece, a grandchild to or from an event, the situation wherein you have a child in between booster seat sizes.

Once again, the enforceability: We need cops out there on the streets of our communities enforcing all these laws that we generate here at Queen's Park. Just today, the government came in with their much-touted—at least self-touted by the government members themselves—amendments around emergency management. Far be it from me to rain on anybody's parade. And Mr Colle and Ms Broten, the two members are out there jostling each other out of the view of the camera during the interviews out there in the scrums.

Mr Colle: They're standing shoulder to shoulder.

Mr Kormos: Oh, there's Mr Colle. I saw it. One would bodycheck the other and then the other would dive back into the scrum circle.

Mr Colle: They were hip to hip.

Mr Kormos: Oh yes, there was no competition whatsoever between the two of them in terms of getting access to that scrum. You see it from time to time here, but talk about the dance. It was a dance. It was the dance of MPPs who were out there on the stroll—

Mr Colle: On the troll, did you say?

Mr Kormos: —on the stroll, trolling—who knew that they could give a far better interview than their colleague who's currently being interviewed by the press. It's a fascinating dance and game, and I witnessed it.

But again, here we have—

Mr Colle: You've never done it.

Mr Kormos: Oh gosh, the stroll, where's that?

Here we have legislation, self-touted, yet at the end of the day the real, fundamental issue around public safety, community safety, is restoring the public sector, rebuilding the public sector. It's getting cops out there—and not 50-cent or 40-cent or 30-cent cops, but 100% cops, 100-cents-on-the-dollar cops—in communities, generating net increases in policing. It's getting firefighters out there. It's establishing minimum staffing standards for fire-fighting services to abide by and, more importantly, giving their communities the financial resources to acquire and to maintain that adequate staffing.

Then, of course, we've got paramedics. Paramedics in this province continue to be abused and exploited and, quite frankly, so taken for granted when it comes to granting them the resources, like down in Niagara, for instance—everything from radio systems to adequate pay—so they can remain competitive in all sectors of the paramedic world, with competitive employers who are creating huge turnovers in the area of dispatch, amongst other things, a critical element of the paramedic role.

I mentioned White Meadows Farms down on Effingham Road in North Pelham. White Meadows is a second-generation farm. I talked to the dad. He had come here, I think he said, around 1937 as a young teenager with his parents. They came from out west, from Manitoba. They were part of that exodus from Canada's west, from Canada's wheat fields, forced by the Depression into industrial Ontario, looking for work, simply unable to make it on their own. They eventually purchased this farm property, which is run as a dairy farm and some fruit farming but, over the course of the years, has tapped a huge forest of maple sugar trees. One of the rites of passage for schoolkids in Niagara region is to visit that sugar bush every year come maple syrup time and witness maple syrup making in real life, real terms, real time.

White Meadows is just an incredible place during maple sugar time for folks to visit, and an incredible place in between time. They have a great restaurant there specializing obviously in some very native Ontario products, the sort of stuff the farmers grow and work so

hard growing, making sure that it's produced for the benefit of all of us.

I put to Mr Hoy, the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, that I had wished, and continue to wish, that he could prevail upon his House leader to sever the portions of this bill that deal with school buses. I expect that, were we able to sever them—because I don't see any need to put that principle, that piece of legislation, once again to committee. I believe we could proceed with that without committee work. The rest of the bill, rightly, has got to go to committee. There are people out there who are going to have things to say, people from any number of sectors. How long the committee should be depends upon the level of interest out there across the province that people have, that members of this provincial community have, in addressing the bill.

I appreciate that our colleague from Hamilton East, Ms Horwath, took the lead on this. Normally, Gilles Bisson would be taking the lead on this bill, it being a transportation bill. But Ms Horwath, being the type of working person she is, said, "No, don't worry. I'll do the lead on this bill like I've done the lead on so many others for so many other critics." In the course of doing that, Gilles Bisson lost his lead, but I'm sure he'll be speaking to the bill in due course.

But Ms Horwath, you will recall, in the course of her comments to this bill, had occasion to talk about, yes, our kids, kids in our community and school buses, and the fact that 30—no, it's 31, isn't it, Ms Horwath? Thirty-one school boards across this province are having their pockets picked by this government in terms of funding for busing of kids in those jurisdictions. Hamilton is one of them, huh? The District School Board of Niagara is another one.

1730

Gosh, Ms Horwath, you're one New Democrat in a pond of Liberals there in Hamilton, just as I am but one New Democrat—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: A pond of Liberals—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, what did you think I said, Mr McMeekin? Spit it out.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I thought you said, "Fond of Liberals."

Mr Kormos: Mr McMeekin did spit it out. Folks can't see, but it's not attractive. I'll not invite him to do that again.

So here you are, Ms Horwath, one New Democrat, a very good one, in a pond of Liberals, and there I am down in Niagara—gosh, yes, Hudak is a Tory, and then we've got two Liberals with the government. But Hamilton gets whacked, and so does Niagara—it gets hammered—in terms of funding for busing of kids. Don't just nod your head as if this is some sort of mundane, no-problem sort of thing; understand what happens when you reduce these budgets for school busing. Either a board has, as some are inclined to say, to borrow from Peter to Paul, or rob Peter to pay Paul, or the board has to put more kids in fewer buses on longer bus roads.

We've had occasion down in Niagara to observe kids, especially kindergarten kids who are in school a half-day, who literally spend more time being bused to and from their school than they are in the classroom. That's remarkable. That surely isn't healthy. It surely isn't good education. In the broadest meaning of the term, I'm not sure that it's safe either.

We understand the need for vicarious liability around this issue. The problem is that school bus operators, who are inevitably the people reporting the offence, are unable to identify the driver. That means we've got this vicarious liability. But the problem is that a school bus operator, at the same time while he or she is making sure that kids get off the bus, keeping their eyes peeled for vehicles approaching and coming up from behind, is hard-pressed to also even record the licence plate number. I can't help but indicate that if and when there are problems in any given community around drivers, vehicles not properly accepting the restrictions of the Highway Traffic Act and stopping as they're supposed to—approaching from either direction a school bus that's stopped with its red lights flashing—I'm telling you that the best deterrent, the most effective deterrent, is having cops who are able to literally sit there and look out for so-called hot spots, areas where this type of behaviour has been reported, so that they can not just catch the vehicle and fine the owner but so they can apprehend the driver.

I've got no qualms with the principle that Mr Zimmer—he's a lawyer; he knows about these things—would call "vicarious liability." But I've got to tell you that vicarious liability can be as significant a cop-out in this type of circumstance as can red-light photos, because the problem is that you punish the vehicle owner. The fact is that red light photos, just like vicarious liability, can't detect the drunk driver, the suspended driver, the uninsured driver, the underage driver or the unlicensed driver. It seems to me that if we're really serious about highway safety, we've got to approach driving habits vis-à-vis the actual people engaging in those bad habits, the drivers themselves.

That then takes me, of course, to this government's failure to keep its promise to reduce auto insurance rates by first 10% and then another 10%; this government's dismal, pathetic, miserable failure to keep its promise to in any way control auto insurance premiums for drivers across Ontario. This government promised first 10% and then another 10% reduction in rates that had already skyrocketed. I tell you, I am searching for the one driver in this province who actually enjoyed a reduction in premiums. Mr Yakabuski didn't get a reduction in premiums, that I understand. But I tell you that I am searching, because what rots people's socks, what drives them crazy, is when they're good drivers, make no claims, get no tickets and their premiums still go up and their car is one year older.

People understand why you've got to go after the bad driver. People understand why bad drivers should pay more. But the corollary of that is that good drivers should

pay less. We should be rewarding good drivers, just like they do in British Columbia.

Did you know that, Speaker? In British Columbia, good drivers are rewarded for being good drivers, because they pay less and bad drivers pay more. It's called a bonus-malus system. Mr Martiniuk will explain what bonus malus means, because he understands Latin. Bonus malus: Good drivers pay less; bad drivers pay more. A good driver in British Columbia, that public, non-profit automobile insurance system that has over the course of decades now contained premiums, may stabilize them, and when there are premium increases, the premium increases are much more modest and, quite frankly, also deliver a far superior product. Do you understand what I'm saying?

In British Columbia, there are full tort rights. An innocent accident victim has the right to compensation for all of his or her injuries, including economic loss, along with a no-fault benefits package for the single vehicle accident, the insured who is at fault who doesn't have somebody else to look to for compensation. So you've got a far better benefits package, a far lower rate and a far fairer system, where the discrimination isn't based on age or gender but on whether or not you've demonstrated yourself to be a responsible driver. So there you go.

So I say to this government, it wouldn't be inconsistent with Liberal philosophy to support public auto insurance. Liberals in Alberta endorse it and advocate it and are campaigning on it. Liberals in eastern Canada think auto insurance, run and owned by the people of their province—publicly owned and non-profit—is a pretty fine idea.

The people of Ontario know that public auto insurance, driver-owned auto insurance, the sort of auto insurance that Mel Swart had advocated for so many years across this province—and continues to believe in, I tell you; old Mel Swart hasn't lost any of his passion or commitment to public auto insurance—the sort of auto insurance that the people of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, notwithstanding any number of changes in the political regimes that have held power in those provinces; the sort of public, non-profit auto insurance that those jurisdictions, those three provinces, have maintained through incredibly hostile governments, incredibly pro-privatization governments—you know, the Vander Zalm Socreds.

So it seems to me that if this government were serious about making life a little better for Ontarians, it would end its dastardly and evil relationship with the private, for-profit auto insurance industry. It would send those clowns packing, send them marching, and send the private, for-profit auto insurance companies that have been highway robbers for decades in this province, ripping off drivers and innocent accident victims; tell them, if they're so insistent that they're not making any money, that maybe it's time for them to get out of the business, because the people of Ontario could do a better job, just like the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan

and British Columbia have, to make owning a car and driving a car affordable, and to guarantee real fairness, not just for drivers but for innocent accident victims.

Think about it. With some eight million vehicles insured in this province, you would have the largest risk pool in the world. Insurance, although the actuaries can make it look complex, is really quite simple. It's about sharing risk. The larger the risk pool, the less expensive it is. That's not difficult to understand. Like the guy says on the Cooking Channel, it ain't rocket science.

We'd have the largest risk pool in the world, the largest single database. There'd be no more insurance fraud. There'd be no uninsured vehicles. Why, the savings, the return on ensuring that those uninsured vehicles are now paying their annual insurance premiums, the first year alone would pay for the capital costs of building a public auto insurance system in this province.

We would be the envy of the balance of North America. We'd have delegations visiting Ontario. We'd solve our tourism problem because we'd have politicians from all over the western world coming to Canada, and specifically Ontario, to see how it's done.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): It amuses me. I have to respond, but I didn't hear very much that was directed toward this legislation. The insurance program of our McGuinty government has been working. It's been doing a good job. I would like to get back, though, more to the issue at hand.

I wonder why this legislation has taken so long to be brought in. I know the member from Erie-Lincoln said today that we're too involved in decisions for Ontario.

1740

But I go back to the 1970s, when a nephew of mine was killed coming out of a school bus in front of his mother. I think it was about a year after that that the legislation came in—partly for that death; partly for other deaths—where we did have to stop for the buses, but I think that was the time that that came in.

I wonder now—we've got all of this good legislation, which I commend the Minister of Transportation for bringing in and is obviously going to save lives and is going to provide that additional safety. When you're looking at a car that costs \$15,000 to \$35,000, depending on how you're hauling these children around, and you wonder what the incremental costs are, you've got air bags, you've got the safety seats—so it's extremely important that this legislation comes forward and it's extremely important that we get these measures in place quickly.

I just wonder how many lives we would have saved since the mid-1970s when that first legislation for the school buses came in, but it's always difficult to bring in new legislation. People figure that their lives are going to be changed, but why are they going to be changed? They're going to be changed to protect young lives. It will cost a few dollars, but this is good legislation, and I'm really pleased that we're proceeding quickly with it.

Mr Yakabuski: Always a pleasure to respond to the member from Niagara Centre.

I did want to mention again that my good colleague from Erie-Lincoln is celebrating his birthday today, and I wanted to personally get it on the record that I'm wishing him a very, very happy birthday—number 37 for Mr Hudak.

One thing about this legislation—and I didn't catch a whole lot of the member for Niagara Centre's issues with the bill; I must have missed some of that—but I did want to talk about the fact that one thing we can absolutely be certain of, certainly from my point of view, is that there is no greater priority in this province or any other jurisdiction, in my home or any other home, than our children. So I want to get that on the record straight away: If any party, particularly the government side here, wants to question the motives of opposition members with regard to this piece of legislation, please do not impugn our motives when it comes to our concern for the safety of our children in this province.

One thing I did want to mention while my short time is running out here is we've got the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association in the dining room tonight. I just had the opportunity to drop down there. I would suggest that you go down there and enjoy some of the fine foods that they're serving, because this is another business in the province of Ontario that the government wants to shut down by way of regulation. I have some very significant concerns about what they are doing with regard to the deer and elk farmers here in the province of Ontario, but we'll be speaking to that at another time.

Ms Horwath: It's my great pleasure to comment on the remarks of my colleague Mr Kormos from Niagara Centre, particularly the way that he began his speech in indicating how important it is to make sure that the different parties that are responsible for pieces of this legislation coming into force have the tools to be able to do that.

I think he referred to the greenbelt legislation as an example of groups that will be overburdened in regard to government legislation and not be compensated for it—particularly in his area, the fear that farmers have in regard to the value of their agricultural land and how that value is going to be affected by the greenbelt legislation, and recognizing how important the farmers believe the greenbelt legislation is and also recognizing that they are the ones who are going to be burdened, to a great extent, with the insurance of that legislation coming into force.

He spoke about a number of different things specific to the bill, particularly concerns around how the graduated licences and how the booster seats were going to be brought forward, and how perhaps the federal government might be able to be involved in regulating the manufacturing of the vehicles to make sure that these things are undertaken by manufacturers. Also, particularly, I think he spoke about the enforceability of the legislation, and used that point to indicate how important it's going to be to have the government provide resources to—I think he mentioned police forces in particular, but certainly police forces. He spoke about the need to rebuild the public sector resources that are necessary to enforce safety in our communities.

Finally, I believe that he spent some time talking about some of the broken promises this government had around auto insurance and how that is affected by this legislation.

Mr Colle: This bill is focused on child safety, and it's baffling to me why the opposition has been delaying and deferring this since last May. This is a no-brainer. My colleague here from Chatham-Kent has been fighting for safety around school buses; this bill incorporates some of that safety. People all over Ontario, petitions, people saying that it's about time to stop people who are passing school buses that are stopped in front of schools: This bill is going to help address that issue. I don't know how the opposition keeps arguing against that.

The second thing is booster seats. It's proven that booster seats do save lives for children who are not quite safe in a full-blown seat belt. It's empirically proven.

These are two straight-ahead pieces of legislation in one. They're going to protect children in a very real way, a pragmatic way, and all we hear is all these stories about everything else, dealing with an issue that was brought by the people of Ontario to this Legislature. I think that it was brought more than three years ago, four years ago, by the member from Chatham-Kent. This is how long it has taken to basically say no to people who speed by stopped school buses and endanger the lives of children coming off school buses. We still hear all kinds of reasons why this bill should not be debated, why they ring the bells—on and on it goes. The people are saying that it's about time that we moved ahead.

This is a very good, positive piece of legislation the people of Ontario have asked for. Let's get on and do what they have asked for: protect their children.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: The last commentator makes a point. The minister called this bill back on May 4 of this year for first reading. The House voted on it then, so that means it proceeds on to second reading. For this government to wait this long to call this bill for second reading is—give your head a shake. It is remarkable that this government is so disinterested in its own legislation that it allows its own legislation to linger and gather dust on back shelves.

Look, some of you folks have been here long enough: How does a government pass bills? By calling them and calling them day after day until they're debated, and then, once they're debated, you vote on them. Again, it ain't rocket science. It's not complex stuff. It's pretty simple, pretty basic. You tell the House leaders from the other caucuses, "This is the bill that we're calling today, and quite frankly, if we don't finish today, we'll call it again tomorrow. And if we don't finish it tomorrow, we'll call it again the day after that." At some point, the debate's going to be over. The debate's going to be over because there are no more people interested in participating in the debate, or because, in the case of some caucuses, every person who's entitled to debate has debated and they can't call more people to debate it anyway.

I find it passing strange. Here we have a majority government, a big majority—not a little majority; a big majority—and once again, the observation that I happened to make last Thursday: They couldn't organize a drunk-up at a brewery, because, notwithstanding that huge majority, they can't get bills through the House, and then whine and complain and say, "Oh, the opposition are debating it." My goodness. My goodness. You want to pass legislation? Call the bills. Let's get them debated.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr McNeely: It would seem that the person who was just speaking seems to have forgotten that the last time this was called, the debate was adjourned by his party.

Bill 73 will save lives and protect the young passengers of our province. I commend the minister for bringing this legislation in. We've discussed it before. It makes booster seats mandatory for preschool children and primary-school-aged children. It will stiffen penalties for drivers who misuse or fail to use proper seats. It will improve safety on and around school buses with new safety crossing arms, emergency exits and stiffer penalties for drivers or owners who pass buses when kids are getting on and off.

Having three sons, one issue that comes home to me is how Bill 73 will protect the young drivers of our province. My riding, like most ridings in this province, has a lot of young drivers with their own cars. My own sons drove our family cars around Cumberland and Orléans when they were teenagers. On the streets of Fallingbrook, the part of Ottawa-Orléans where I live, you see teenagers zipping around in their cars every day. It's a typical sight in Fallingbrook, something most people wouldn't even think twice about. But some of the numbers are enough to make you worry. Sixteen-year-olds to 19-year-olds make up a little over 5% of Ontario's population, but they accounted for 11% of all traffic fatalities in our province in 2002. Road accidents are the leading cause of death and injury to Ontario's youth.

Driving can be dangerous, no matter how old you are, especially when you consider all the distractions that are out there, when you take into account all the conditions that affect how alert you are on the road: ringing cellphones, loud music, passengers who can take away from the level of concentration we give to our driving.

For young drivers today, those distractions seem ever present, but while these kids are still getting used to being behind the wheel, those distractions can be fatal. Look at the stats. Anyone who has ever been in a car with a group of teenagers knows what kind of distraction they can be. But did you know that drivers aged 19 and under are three times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident or collision if they are carrying passengers aged 19 and under in the car—three times more likely? This is reflected in insurance costs.

Another US study shows that the likelihood of a collision increases significantly once there is more than one passenger in the car. We've had a few accidents in

my riding with kids involved. Under current legislation, the number of passengers that a young driver with a G2 permit can have in his or her car is limited to the number of working seat belts in the car. In your average sedan, that works out to four. In a minivan, you've got six passengers. A teenaged driver with four to six teenaged passengers: That's a lot of risk when you look at the stats.

What Bill 73 proposes to do is reduce that risk, reduce those distractions by restricting the number of young passengers that young drivers can carry in their vehicles. Fewer passengers mean fewer distractions and more attention paid to what's going on in front of them on the road. For the first six months, driving independently under the G2 licence, young drivers could take one passenger aged 19 and under. Then, until they get their full G licence or until they turn 20 years old, they could carry up to three passengers.

Bill 73 is not unique in its aims. Across Canada and the US, 31 jurisdictions already have some form of teenaged passenger restriction in effect. The statistics are there. These are good, sensible restrictions that will help to ensure that kids get off to the best possible start behind the wheel, that they will develop good driving habits for the future. These restrictions will promote driving conditions where young people are focused on road safety instead of chatting with their back-seat passengers.

This legislation is backed by police officers, the ones who are on the front lines dealing with auto collisions on a daily basis. A staff sergeant from York region says, "Any steps taken to make youth safer behind the wheel are great." I agree. With this legislation, this government is proving that we're committed to a safer Ontario: safer passengers, safer drivers and safer for all our young people.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion respecting House proceedings for this afternoon and evening and to have the Speaker put the question on the motion without debate or amendment.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As usual, the official opposition is more than happy to help out the government House leader and do whatever we can do.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The government House—point of order?

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, the eagerness of the official opposition to roll over for the Liberals is noted.

The Deputy Speaker: The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order of the House, the House continue to meet beyond 6 pm today for the purpose of considering the following orders: G18, G60, G70 and G96; and that upon completion of those orders, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until 1:30 pm tomorrow; and that this afternoon's debate on second reading of Bill 73 be

considered one full sessional day for the purposes of standing order 46.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

AUDIT STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES
PUBLICS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor / Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjections.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the bill be sent to the legislative assembly committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

ONTARIO HERITAGE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

There being none, Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), there is a request that the vote on the motion by Madame Meilleur for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act, be deferred until Tuesday, November 2, 2004. This is signed by the chief government whip.

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND
BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS
ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The official opposition wants to thank the government House leader for giving in to the Tory party's desire to ban negative-option billing and thanks the government House leader. There is nothing wrong with admitting that you were wrong and backing down.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

There being none, Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Watson for second reading of Bill 70 be deferred until Tuesday, November 2. It's signed by the chief government whip.

LIQUOR LICENCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I look forward to this bill going to committee. I want to just put on the record that I've had a number of calls on this which are interesting to debate when it gets to committee. I am certainly looking forward to my opportunity to speak on this bill at third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Hearing none, Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't hear a no. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Watson for second reading of Bill 96 be deferred until Tuesday, November 2. It's signed by the chief government whip.

There being no further business, and pursuant to the motion, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
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 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Baird, John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Opposition house leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Deputy Opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L)	St Catharines	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Broten, Laurel C.(L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire au premier ministre
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy Opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Speaker / Président
Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Samia-Lambton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Urban) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Secteur urbain)
Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	
Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron-Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade (innovation) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce (Innovation)
Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	
Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Rural) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Secteur rural)
Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel, Tony C. Wong
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Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Jeff Leal
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Kim Craitor,
Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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